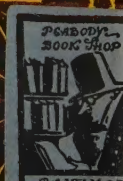
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LETTERS FROM MY MILL

LETTERS TO AN ABSENT ONE

WITHDRAWN

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LETTERS FROM MY MILL

&

LETTERS TO AN ABSENT ONE

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON 1928

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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TO MY DEAR

ERNEST DAUDET

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PREAMBLE.

BEFORE Maître Honorat Grapazi, notary of the district of Pampérigouste

Appeared:

The Sieur Gaspard Mitifio, husband of Vivette Cornille, owner of the property called "Les Cigalières" and there residing:

The same by these presents has sold and conveyed under warranty of right and possession, free of all debt, claims and mortgages,

To the Sieur Alphonse Daudet, poet, residing in Paris, here present and accepting,

A windmill for flour, situated in the valley of the Rhone, and in the heart of Provence, on a hillside, wooded with pine and live-oak; the said mill being abandoned for twenty years or more, and therefore unfit for grinding, as appears from the wild vines, mosses, rosemarys, and other parasitical growths which have climbed its sails;

Notwithstanding which, such as it is and appears with its great wheel broken and its platform where the grass is growing between the bricks, the Sieur Daudet declares that finding the said mill to his liking and serviceable to his works of poesy, he

accepts the same at his risks and perils, and without any claim whatsoever against the vendor for repairs which may have to be made.

This sale is concluded in the lump for the sum agreed upon, which the Sieur Daudet placed and deposited on the desk in current coin, the which sum was immediately touched and withdrawn by the Sieur Mitifio, within sight of the undersigned notary and witnesses, for which receipt is given.

Deed done at Pampérigouste in the office of Honorat Grapazi, in presence of Francet Mamaï, fife-player, and Louiset, called le Quique, cross-bearer of the White Penitents;

Who have signed with the parties and the notary after reading of the deed.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Again, 'twas the terrible bandit . . . Count Sévéran, whom he drove to his eyrie on the heights . . . *Frontispiece*

She stayed thus, never moving, till the stars in the sky grew pale . . *Page* 34

Overcome at last, he let himself fall into a big arm-chair . . . " 168

LETTERS FROM MY MILL.

I.

TAKING POSSESSION.

'T WAS the rabbits who were astonished! So long had they seen the mill-door closed, the walls and the platform invaded by verdure, that they had come to think the race of millers was extinct; and finding the place convenient, they made it, as it were, a sort of headquarters, a centre of strategical operations, — the Jemmapes mill of rabbits. The night of my arrival, there were fully, without exaggeration, a score sitting in a circle on the platform, warming their paws in the moonshine. One second to open a window, and, scat! away went the bivouac, routed; all the little white behinds scurrying away, tails up, into the thicket. I hope they will come back again.

Another much astonished individual was the tenant of the first floor, a solemn old owl with the head of a thinker, who has lived in the mill for over twenty years. I found him in the upper chamber, motionless and erect on the horizontal shaft, in the midst of the plaster rubbish and fallen roof-tiles. He looked at me for a moment with his

round eye; then, alarmed at not knowing me, he began to say, "Hoo! hoo!" and to shake his wings heavily, gray with dust — those devilish thinkers! they never brush themselves. . . Well! never mind, whatever he is, with his blinking eyes and his scowling look, this silent tenant pleased me, and I hastened to beg him to renew his lease. He now occupies, as before, the whole upper part of the mill with an entrance from the roof; I reserve to myself the lower room, a small white-washed room, low and vaulted like a convent refectory.

It is from there that I write to you, with the door wide open to the good sun.

A pretty pine wood, sparkling with light, runs down before me to the foot of the slope. On the horizon, the Alpilles outline their delicate crests. No noise. Faintly, afar, the sound of a fife, a curlew amid the lavender, the mule-bells on the highway. . . All this beautiful Provençal landscape lives by light.

And now, think you I could regret your noisy, darksome Paris? I am so well-off in my mill! It is so exactly the spot I was looking for, a warm little fragrant corner, far from newspapers, cabs, and fog! . . And what pretty things about me! It is scarcely a week since I came, and yet my head is already stuffed full of impressions and memories. *Tenez!* no later than last evening I watched the return of the flocks to the *mas* (farm) which stands at the foot of the slope; and I de-

clare to you I would not give that sight for all the "first nights" that you have had in Paris this week. You shall judge.

I must tell you that in Provence it is the custom, as it is in Switzerland, to send the flocks to the mountains on the coming of hot weather. Animals and men spend five or six months up there under the stars, in grass to their bellies; then, at the first chill of autumn, down they come to the *mas* and feed after that on the little gray foot-hills that are fragrant with rosemary. So last night they came. The gates awaited them, wide open; the folds were filled with fresh straw. From hour to hour the people said: "Now they are at Eyguières — now at the Paradou." Then, all of a sudden, towards evening, a great shout: "Here they come!" and away off in the distance I could see the flocks advancing in a halo of dust. The whole road seemed to be marching with them. The old rams came first, horns in front with a savage air; after them the ruck of the sheep, the mothers rather weary, their nurslings beside them; the mules, with red pompons, carrying in baskets the day-old lambkins, which they rocked as they walked; then came the dogs, their tongues to earth, perspiring, and two tall shepherd rascals swathed in red serge mantles which fell to their heels like copes.

All this defiles before me joyously with a pattering sound like rain, and is swallowed through the gateway. You should see what excitement in the farm! From their high perches the green

and gold peacocks with their tulle crests, have recognized the new-comers and hail them with a formidable trumpet-blast. The poultry yard, which was going to sleep, wakes up with a start. All are afoot, pigeons, ducks, turkeys, guinea-fowl. They all seem crazy; even the hens talk of sitting up all night! One would really think that each sheep had brought back in its wool with the fragrance of the wild Alp a little of that keen mountain air which intoxicates and sets one dancing.

In the midst of all this racket, the flocks regain their abode. Nothing can be more charming than this re-entrance. The old rams are tenderly moved at seeing their old cribs; the lambs, even the little ones born on the journey who had never seen the farm, look about them in amazement.

But most touching of all are the dogs, those brave shepherd dogs, full of business about their flocks and seeing nought else in the *mas*. In vain does the watch-dog call to them from his kennel; the well-bucket full of fresh water entices them in vain; they see nothing, hear nothing till the flocks are housed, the big bolt run on the wicket gate, and the shepherds at table in the lower room. Then and not till then, they consent to go to kennel, and there, while lapping their porringers of soup, they tell their farm comrades what things they have done up there on the mountains, a gloomy place, where there are wolves, and great crimson foxgloves full of dew to the brim.

II.

THE BEAUCAIRE DILIGENCE.

It was the day of my arrival at this place. I had taken the diligence of Beaucaire, a worthy old vehicle that has no great distance to go before she gets home, but which loiters, nevertheless, by the way, to have an air, in the evening, of coming from afar. We were five on the imperial, not counting the conductor.

First, a keeper of the Camargue, a small, stocky, hairy man, smelling of his wild life, with big, bloodshot eyes and silver ear-rings. Then two Beaucairese, a baker and his journeyman, both very red, very short-winded, but splendid in profile, two Roman coins bearing the effigy of Vitellius. Lastly, on the front seat, beside the conductor, a man — no, a cap, an enormous squirrel-skin cap, who said little or nothing and gazed at the road with a melancholy air.

All these persons knew each other, and talked aloud of their affairs very freely. The man of the Camargue told that he was coming from Nîmes, where he had been summoned before an examining-judge to answer for a blow with a scythe given to a shepherd. They have such hot blood in Camargue! — and in Beaucaire too! Did not these very two Beaucairese try to cut each other's

throats apropos of the Blessed Virgin? It seemed that the baker belonged to a parish church that was vowed to the Madonna, the one whom the Provençals call "the good mother" and who carries the little Jesus in her arms. The journeyman, on the contrary, sang in the choir of a new church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, that beautiful smiling image represented with pendent arms and her hands full of sun-rays. Hence the quarrel. You ought to have seen how those two good Catholics treated each other, they and their madonnas: —

"She is a pretty one, your immaculate!"

"Get away with your good mother!"

"She saw queer things, that one of yours, in Palestine!"

"And yours, hoo! the fright! Who knows what she did n't do? Ask Saint Joseph."

As if to remind me of the harbour of Naples, knives were on the point of glittering, and, upon my word, I believe the theological battle would have ended that way if the conductor had not come to the rescue.

"Let us alone with your madonnas," he said, laughing, to the two Beaucairese; "all that is women's talk, men should n't meddle in such things."

Thereupon he cracked his whip with a sceptical little air which brought every one round to his opinion.

The discussion ended; but the baker, set a-going, felt the need of letting out the remains of

his ardour; so, turning to the unfortunate cap, sad and silent in his corner, he said with a jeering air:

"And your wife, knife-grinder, what parish does she belong to now?"

It is to be supposed that some very comical meaning was in those words, for the whole imperial went off into roars of laughter. The knife-grinder alone did not laugh. He seemed not to hear. Observing that, the baker turned to me.

"You don't know about his wife, monsieur; a queer one, I can tell you. There are not two like her in all Beaucaire."

The laughs redoubled. The knife-grinder did not stir; he contented himself by saying in a low voice: —

"Hold your tongue, baker."

But that devil of a baker had no idea of holding his tongue, and he began again, more jeering than ever: —

"*Viédase!* The comrade is not to be pitied for having a wife like that. Can't be bored one minute with *her*. Just think! a beauty who gets some one to elope with her every six months has plenty to tell you when she comes back. But for all that, it is a queer little household. Just imagine, monsieur, they had n't been married a year when, paf! away went the wife to Spain with a chocolate-maker. The husband, he stayed at home, weeping and drinking. He was almost crazy. By and by the wife came home, dressed as a Spanish girl and carrying a tambourine. We all said to her: 'Hide, hide, he 'll kill you!' Kill her, indeed! not

he! They lived together as tranquil as ever, and she taught him to play the tambourine."

Here a fresh explosion of laughter. In his corner, without raising his head, the knife-grinder murmured again: —

"Hold your tongue, baker."

The baker paid no attention, but continued: —

"You may perhaps think, monsieur, that after her return from Spain the beauty would have kept quiet. Not she! The husband had taken the thing so well, she thought she would try again. After the Spaniard came an officer, then a Rhone boatman, then a musician, then a — I don't know who. The funny thing is that each time it is the same comedy. The wife elopes, the husband weeps; she returns and he's consoled. And still she is carried off, and still he takes her back. Don't you think he has patience, that husband? It must be said that she is mighty pretty, that little woman, a cardinal's dainty bit, lively, dimpled, plump, with a white skin and a pair of nut-brown eyes that look at the men with a laugh. I' faith, Parisian, if you ever come back through Beaucaire — "

"Oh! hold your tongue, baker, I beg of you," said the unfortunate man again, in a heart-rending tone of voice.

At this moment the diligence stopped. We had reached the *mas des Angloires*. The two bakers got out, and I assure you I did not regret them. Sorry jester! We could hear him still laughing in the farm-yard.

The bakers having departed and the Camargue

man being left at Arles, the imperial seemed empty. The conductor got down and walked beside his horses. We were alone in our corners, the knife-grinder and I, without speaking. It was hot; the leather hood of the vehicle seemed burning. At times I felt my eyes closing and my head getting heavy, but I could not sleep. Always in my ears I heard that "Hold your tongue, I beg of you," so gentle yet so agonizing. Neither could he, the poor soul, sleep. From behind I saw his big shoulders shudder and his hand — a long, pallid, stupid hand — trembling on the back of the seat, like the hand of an aged man. He wept.

"Here you are, at your place, Parisian," cried the conductor, suddenly, pointing with the end of his whip to my green hill with the windmill pinned upon it like a big butterfly.

I hastened to get out. Passing the knife-grinder I tried to look at him beneath his cap; I wanted to see him before I left. As if he had fathomed my thought, the unhappy man raised his head abruptly and planting his eyes in mine he said in a hollow voice: —

"Look at me well, friend; and if, one of these days, you hear there has been trouble in Beaucaire you can say that you know the man who struck the blow."

The face was dull and sad, with small and faded eyes. There were tears in those eyes; but in the voice there was hatred. Hatred is the anger of the weak! If I were that wife, I should beware of it.

III.

THE SECRET OF MAÎTRE CORNILLE.

FRANCET MAMAÏ, an old fife-player, who comes from time to time to make a night of it with me, drinking boiled wine, related the other evening a little village drama of which my mill was the witness some twenty years ago. The old man's story touched me, and I shall try to tell it to you just as I heard it.

Imagine, for the moment, my dear readers, that you are sitting before a pot of fragrant wine and that an old Provençal fife-player is speaking to you.

Our countryside, my good monsieur, was not always such a dead region and without renown as it is to-day. There was a time when the millers did a great trade, and from ten leagues round the farmers brought us their wheat to grind. The hills all about the village were covered with windmills. To right and left one saw nothing but sails twirling to the mistral above the pines, strings of little donkeys laden with sacks going up and down the roads; and all the week it was a pleasure to hear on the heights the crack of the whips, the rattle of the sails and the *Dia hue !* of the millers'

men. On Sundays we went to the mills in parties. The millers, they paid for the muscat. The wives were as fine as queens, with their lace kerchiefs and their gold crosses. I took my fife and till it was pitch-dark night they danced the farandole. Those mills, you see, they made the joy and the wealth of our parts.

Unluckily the Paris Frenchmen took an idea to establish a steam flour-mill on the road to Tarascon. Fine thing, great novelty! People took a habit of sending their wheat to the flour-dealers, and the poor windmills were left without work. For some time they tried to struggle, but steam was the stronger, and, one after the other, *pécaïre!* they were forced to shut up. No more files of little donkeys. The handsome wives had to sell their gold crosses. No more muscat! no more farandole! The mistral might blow, but the sails stood still. And then, one fine day, the village rulers ordered all those mills pulled down and their place to be sown with vines and olives.

But in the midst of this general downfall one mill held good and continued to turn courageously on its knoll before the very nose of the steam-millers. That was Maître Cornille's mill, the very one where we are at this moment.

Maître Cornille was an old miller, living for sixty years in flour and mad for his business. The coming of the steam-millers had really made him half crazy. For a week he ran about the village inciting the people and shouting with all

his might that they wanted to poison Provence with steam flour. "Don't go there," he cried; "those brigands in making bread use steam, an invention of the devil, whereas I work by the mistral and the tramontana, which are the breath of the good God." And he spoke out a lot of fine sayings like that in praise of the windmills, but nobody listened to them.

Then, in a fury, the old fellow shut himself up in his mill and lived alone, like a savage beast. He would not even keep his little granddaughter, Vivette, with him, a child of fifteen, who, since the death of her parents, had no one but her *grand* in the world. The poor little thing was now obliged to earn her living, and to hire herself out in the farms wherever she could, for the harvest, the silk-worm times, and the olive-picking. And yet her grandfather seemed to love her, that child. He would often go his four leagues afoot, in the hot sun to see her at the farm where she worked; and when he was near her he would spend whole hours gazing at her and weeping.

In the neighbourhood, people thought that the old miller was niggardly in sending Vivette away, and they said that it did not do him credit to let his granddaughter roam from one farmhouse to another, exposed to the brutality of the bailiffs and to all the miseries of young girls in her condition. And they also thought it very wrong of Maître Cornille, who up to this time had respected himself, to go about the streets like a regular gypsy, barefooted, cap in holes, and trousers

ragged. In fact, on Sundays, when we saw him come in to mass, we were ashamed of him, we old fellows; and Cornille felt it so much that he dared not come and sit upon the workmen's bench. He always stayed at the end of the church, close to the holy-water basin, among the paupers.

In Maître Cornille's life there was something we could not make out. For a long time past no one in the village had taken him wheat, yet the sails of his mill were always turning, as before. At night the old miller was met upon the roads, driving before him his donkey laden with stout sacks of flour.

"Good vespers, Maître Cornille!" the peasants would call to him. "So the mill is going still?"

"Going still, my sons," the old fellow answered with a lively air. "Thank God, it is not work that we lack."

Then, if any one asked him where the devil he found all that work, he would lay a finger on his lips and answer, gravely: "Mum 's the word! I am working for exportation." And never could anything further be got out of him.

As for putting your nose in his mill, that was not to be thought of. Little Vivette herself was not allowed to enter.

If we passed in front of it, the door was always seen to be closed, the heavy sails were in motion, the old donkey was browsing on the turf of the platform, and a tall, thin cat, taking the sun on the sill of the window, looked at us malignantly.

All this had the scent of some mystery about it,

and made people gossip. Every one explained in his own way the secret of Maître Cornille, but the general rumour was that there were even more sacks of silver crowns in the mill than sacks of flour.

In the end, however, all was found out; and this was how: —

I discovered, one fine day, while making the young people dance with my fife, that the eldest of my sons and little Vivette were in love with each other. In my heart I was n't sorry, because, after all, the name of Cornille was held in honour among us, and, besides, I knew it would give me pleasure to see that pretty little sparrow of a Vivette hopping about my house. Only, as the lovers had many occasions to be together, I wished, for fear of accidents, to settle the thing at once. So up I went to the mill to say a word or two to the grandfather. Ah! the old wizard! you should just have seen the way he received me! Impossible to make him open the door. I explained the matter as well as I could through the keyhole; and all the while that I was speaking, that rascally lean cat was puffing like a devil above my head.

The old man did n't give me time to finish, but shouted to me, most uncivilly, to get back to my fife, and that if I was in such a hurry to marry my son, I could go and get a girl at the steam-mill. You can think if my blood did n't rise to hear such words; but, all the same, I had wisdom enough to control myself, and, leaving the old madman in his

mill, I returned to tell the children of my failure. Poor lambs! they could not believe it; they begged me, as a favour, to let them go to the mill themselves and speak to grandpapa. I had n't the courage to refuse, and prrrt! off went my lovers.

When they got to the mill, Maître Cornille had just gone out. The door was locked and double-locked, but the old man had left his ladder outside, and immediately the idea came to the children to get in through the window and see what was really going on inside of the famous mill.

Singular thing! the room of the millstone was empty. Not a sack, not a grain of wheat, not the slightest sign of flour on the walls or the spiders' webs! There was not even that good warm smell of crushed wheat that scents a mill so pleasantly. The horizontal bar was covered with dust, and the great lean cat was sleeping on it.

The lower room had the same air of utter poverty and abandonment, — a wretched bed, a few rags, a morsel of bread on a step of the stairway, and, in a corner, three or four worn-out sacks, from which oozed plaster rubbish and chalky earth.

There was the secret of Maître Cornille! It was plaster rubbish that he carried in the evening along the roads to save the honour of the mill and to make believe it was grinding flour! Poor mill! Poor Cornille! For many a long day the steam-mill had robbed them of their last customer. The sails still turned, but the millstone revolved in a void.

The children returned in tears, and told me what they had seen. My heart almost burst as I listened. Not losing a minute, I ran to the neighbours; I told them the thing in a word, and we all agreed that we must at once carry what wheat there was in the village to Cornille's mill. No sooner said than done. The whole village started, and we arrived at the top with a procession of donkeys laden with wheat, — real wheat, that was!

The mill was wide open. Before the door Maître Cornille, seated on a sack of plaster, was weeping, his head in his hands. He had just discovered, on returning, that during his absence some one had entered the mill and surprised his sad secret.

"Poor me!" he was saying. "There 's nothing for me to do now but to die. The mill is dishonoured."

And he sobbed to break one's heart, calling his mill all sorts of names, and talking to it as if to a real person.

At this moment the donkeys appeared on the terrace, and we all began to shout very loud, as in the good old days of the millers: —

"Ohè! the mill! Ohè! Maître Cornille!"

And there were the sacks piled up before the door, and the fine ruddy grain spilling over to the ground on all sides.

Maître Cornille opened his eyes very wide. In the hollow of his old hand he scooped up some of the wheat and said, laughing and weeping together: —

"It is wheat! . . Lord God! . . Good wheat! Let me alone, let me look at it."

Then, turning towards us, he added: —

"Ah! I knew you would all come back to me. Those steam-mill fellows are thieves."

We wanted to carry him off in triumph to the village.

"No, no, children," he said. "I must first feed my mill. Just think how long it is since she had a morsel between her teeth!"

And we all had tears in our eyes to see the poor old fellow wandering right and left, opening the sacks, watching the millstone, while the wheat was being crushed and the fine powdery flour flew up to the ceiling.

To do ourselves justice, I must tell you that from that day we never let the old miller lack for work. Then, one morning, Maître Cornille died, and the sails of our last mill ceased to turn — forever, this time. Cornille dead, no one took his place. But what of that, monsieur? All things come to an end in this world, and we must believe that the days of windmills are over, like those of the barges on the Rhone, the parliaments, and the grand flowered jackets.

IV.

M. SEGUIN'S GOAT.

TO M. PIERRE GRINGOIRE, LYRIC POET IN PARIS.

YOU will always be the same, my poor Gringoire!

What! a place is offered to you as reporter on one of the best Parisian newspapers, and you have the coolness to refuse it? Look at yourself, you luckless fellow! look at your shabby jacket, those dilapidated breeches, and that thin face that cries out hunger. It is to this that your passion for noble verse has brought you! This is what your loyal ten years' service as page to Sire Apollo has won! On the whole, are you not ashamed of it?

Come, make yourself a reporter, imbecile; make yourself a reporter. You will earn good crown-pieces, and have your knife and fork at Brébant's, and you can exhibit yourself on all first nights with a new feather in your cap.

No? What, you won't? You insist on living free and as you please to the end of the chapter? Well, then! listen to the history of M. Seguin's goat. You will see what is gained by wishing to live at liberty.

M. Seguin never had luck with his goats. He lost them in all kinds of ways. One fine morning

they broke their tether and wandered away to the mountain, where a wolf ate them. Neither the caresses of their master nor fear of the wolf, nothing could restrain them. They were, it appeared, independent goats, wanting at any cost free air and liberty.

The worthy M. Seguin, who did not understand the nature of his animals, was shocked. He said:

"That's enough; goats are bored by living with me; I won't keep another."

However, after losing six in that way, he was not discouraged, and he bought a seventh; but this time he was careful to get her quite young, so young that she might the better get accustomed to live with him.

Ah! Gringoire, she was pretty, that little goat of M. Seguin's, so pretty with her soft eyes, her little tuft of beard like a sub-officer, her black and shiny hoofs, her ribbed horns, and her long, white hair which wrapped her like a mantle! She was almost as charming as that kid of Esmeralda's — you remember, Gringoire? — and then, so docile, so coaxing, letting herself be milked without budging, and never putting her foot in the bowl! A love of a little goat!

Behind M. Seguin's house was a field hedged round with hawthorn. It was there that he put his new boarder. He fastened her to a stake, at the very best part of the meadow, taking care to give her plenty of rope; and from time to time he went to see if she was satisfied. The goat seemed

very happy, and cropped the grass with such heartiness that M. Seguin was delighted.

"At last," thought the poor man, "here's one at least that is n't bored by living with me!"

M. Seguin deceived himself; the goat was bored.

One day she said to herself, looking at the mountain: —

"How nice it must be up there! What a pleasure to skip in the heather, without this cursed rope, which rubs my neck! It is all very well for asses and cattle to browse in a field, but goats! why, *they* want the open."

From that moment the grass of the meadow seemed to her insipid. Ennui seized her. She grew thin, her milk was scanty. It was really piteous to see her, straining at the tether all day, her head turned to the mountain, her nostril flaming, and she saying "Ma-ë" so sadly.

M. Seguin saw that something was the matter with his goat, but he did not know what. One morning, after he had milked her, the goat turned round and said to him in her patois: —

"Listen, M. Seguin; I am so weary here with you; let me go on the mountain."

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* She, too!" cried poor M. Seguin, stupefied, and he let fall the bowl; then, sitting down on the grass at the side of his goat, he said: —

"Oh! Blanchette, would you leave me?"

And Blanchette answered: —

"Yes, M. Seguin."

"Is n't there grass enough here to please you?"

"Oh! plenty, M. Seguin."

"Do I tie you too short? shall I lengthen the rope?"

"It is n't worth while, M. Seguin."

"Then what is the matter? what do you want?"

"I want to go on the mountain, M. Seguin."

"But, you unhappy little thing, don't you know there are wolves on the mountain? What would you do if a wolf attacked you?"

"I 'd butt him with my horns."

"A wolf would n't care for your horns. He has eaten up goats of mine with much bigger horns than yours. Don't you remember that poor old Renaude who was here last year? Strong and spiteful as a ram. She fought all night with the wolf, but, in the morning, the wolf ate her."

"*Pecaïre!* Poor Renaude! But that does not matter, M. Seguin; let me go to the mountain."

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed M. Seguin, "what *is* the matter with my goats? Another one for the wolf to eat! Well, no, I shall save you in spite of yourself, you slut! and for fear you should break your rope I shall put you in the stable, and there you will stay."

Whereupon M. Seguin led the goat into his brand-new stable, and double-locked the door. Unfortunately, he forgot the window, and hardly had he turned his back before the little one was out and away.

You laugh, Gringoire? *Parbleu!* I suppose

so; you take the side of the goats against that good M. Seguin. We 'll see if you laugh presently.

When the white goat reached the mountain there was general delight. Never had the old fir-trees seen anything so pretty. They received her like a little princess. The chestnut-trees bent to the ground to kiss her with the tips of their branches. The golden gorse opened wide to let her pass, and smelt just as sweet as it could. In fact, the whole mountain welcomed her.

You can imagine, Gringoire, how happy she was! No more rope, no stake, nothing to prevent her from skipping and browsing as she pleased. My dear fellow, the grass was above her horns! and such grass! — luscious, delicate, toothsome, made of all sorts of plants. Quite another thing from that grass in the meadow. And the flowers, oh! Great blue campanulas and crimson foxgloves with their long calyxes, a perfect forest of wild-flowers giving out an intoxicating sweetness.

The white goat, a little tipsy, wallowed in the thick of them with her legs in the air, and rolled down the banks pell-mell with the falling leaves and the chestnuts. Then, suddenly, she sprang to her feet with a bound, and hop! away she went, head foremost, through thicket and bushes, now on a rock, now in a gully, up there, down there, everywhere. You would have said that ten of M. Seguin's goats were on the mountain.

The fact is, Blanchette was afraid of nothing.

She sprang with a bound over torrents that spattered her as she passed with a dust of damp

spray. Then, all dripping, she would stretch herself out on a nice flat rock and dry in the sun. Once, coming to the edge of a slope with a bit of laurel between her teeth, she saw below, far below on the plain, the house of M. Seguin with the meadow behind it; and she laughed till she cried.

"How small it is!" she said; "how could I ever have lived there?"

Poor little thing! being perched so high she fancied she was tall as the world.

Well! it was a good day for M. Seguin's goat. About noon, running from right to left, she fell in with a herd of chamois munching a wild vine with all their teeth. Among them our little white-gowned rover made quite a sensation. They gave her the choicest place at the vine, and all those gentlemen were very gallant. In fact, it appears — but this is between ourselves, Gringoire — that a young chamois with a black coat had the great good fortune to please Blanchette. The pair wandered off in the woods for an hour or so, and if you want to know what they said to each other, go ask those chattering brooks that are running invisible through the mosses.

Suddenly the wind freshened. The mountain grew violet; it was dusk.

"Already!" said the little goat; and she stopped, quite surprised.

Below, the fields were drowned in mist. M. Seguin's meadow disappeared in the fog, and

nothing could be seen of the house but the roof and a trifle of smoke. She heard the little bells of a flock that was on its way home, and her soul grew sad. A falcon, making for his nest, swept her with his wings as he passed. She shuddered. Then came a howl on the mountain:

"Hoo! hoo!"

She thought of the wolf; all day that silly young thing had never once thought of it. At the same moment a horn sounded far, far down the valley. It was that good M. Seguin, making a last effort.

"Hoo! hoo!" howled the wolf.

"Come back! come back!" cried the horn.

Blanchette felt a wish to return, but remembering the stake, the rope, the hedge of the field, she thought that she never could endure that life again and 't was better to remain where she was.

The horn ceased to sound.

The goat heard behind her the rustling of leaves She turned and saw in the shadow two short ears, erect, and two eyes shining. It was the wolf.

Enormous, motionless, seated on his tail, he was looking at the little white goat and smacking his lips in advance. As he knew very well he should eat her up, the wolf was not in a hurry; but when she turned round and saw him he began to laugh wickedly: "Ha! ha! M. Seguin's little goat! —" and he licked his great red tongue round his wily chops.

Blanchette felt she was lost. For an instant, remembering the story of old Renaude, who had

fought all night only to be eaten in the morning, she said to herself that 'twas better, perhaps, to be eaten at once; but then, thinking otherwise, she put herself on guard, head low, horns forward, like the brave little goat that she was. Not that she had any hope of killing the wolf, — goats can't kill wolves, — but only to see if she, too, could hold out as long as old Renaude.

Then the monster advanced, and the pretty little horns began the dance.

Ah! the brave goatling! with what heart she went at it! More than ten times — I 'm not exaggerating, Gringoire — more than ten times she forced the wolf back to get breath. During each of these momentary truces the dainty little thing nibbled one more blade of her dearly loved grass; then, with her mouth full, she returned to the combat. It lasted all through the night. From time to time M. Seguin's goat looked up at the stars as they danced on the cloudless sky and said to herself: —

"Oh! if I can only hold out till dawn."

One after another, the stars went out. Blanchette redoubled the blows of her horns, and the wolf the snap of his teeth. A pale gleam showed on the horizon. The hoarse crowing of a cock rose from a barnyard.

"At last!" said the poor little goat, who had only awaited the dawn to die; and she stretched herself out on the ground in her pretty white fur all spotted with gore.

Then the wolf fell upon her and ate her up.

Adieu, Gringoire!

The story you have now heard is not a tale of my own invention. If ever you come to Provence, our farmers will often tell you of *la cabro de Moussu Seguin, que se battégue touto la neui emé lou loup, e piei lou matin lou loup la mangé.*

You understand me, Gringoire: "And then, in the morning, the wolf ate her up."

THE STARS.

TALE OF A PROVENÇAL SHEPHERD.

In the days when I kept sheep on the Lubéron, I was often for weeks together without seeing a living soul, alone in the pastures with my dog Labri and the flock. From time to time the hermit of the Mont-de-l'Ure passed that way in search of simples; or occasionally I saw the blackened face of some Piedmontese charcoal-burner; but these were quiet folk, silent by force of solitude, having lost their liking for talk, and knowing nothing of what went on below in the towns and villages. So when I heard, every fortnight, on the road coming up the mountain, the bells of our farm mule bringing me food for the next two weeks, and when I saw, appearing little by little above the slope, the lively head of our *miarro* (farm-boy) or the red coif of old Aunt Norade, I was really very happy. I made them tell me all the news of the world down below, the baptisms, the marriages, etc.; but that which interested me above all was to know what the daughter of my master was about, our Demoiselle Stephanette, the prettiest young lady in all the country round. Without seeming to take great interest, I managed to find out when she went to

fêtes and dances, and whether she had new lovers; and if others asked me what such things mattered to me, a poor shepherd on a mountain, I answered that I was twenty years old, and that Mademoiselle Stephanette was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life.

Now one Sunday, when I was expecting my two weeks' provisions, it happened that they did not come until very late. In the morning I said to myself, "'Tis the fault of high mass;" then, about mid-day, there came up a great storm, and I thought that the mule could not start on account of the roads. At last, about three o'clock, when the sky was washed clear and the mountain was shining with sun and water, I heard amid the dripping from the leaves and the gurgle of the overflowing brooks, the tinkle of the mule-bells, as gay and alert as the grand church chimes of an Easter-day. But it was not our little *miarro*, nor old Aunt Norade who was leading him. It was — guess who? Our demoiselle, my children! our demoiselle in person, sitting up straight between the osier baskets, quite rosy with the mountain air and the refreshing coolness of the storm.

The boy was ill; Aunt Norade was off for a holiday with the children. The beautiful Stephanette told me all this as she got off the mule, and also that she came late because she had lost her way; but to see her dressed in her Sunday best, with her flowered ribbon, her brilliant petticoat, and her laces, I must say she had more the look of having lingered at some dance than of search-

ing for a path among the bushes. Oh, the dainty creature! My eyes never wearied of looking at her. It is true that I had never before seen her quite so near. Sometimes, in winter, when the flocks had come down upon the plains and I returned to the farmhouse at night for my supper, she would cross the hall quickly, scarcely speaking to the servants, always gayly dressed and perhaps a little haughty. And now I had her before me, all to myself! Was it not enough to turn my head?

When she had taken the provisions from the basket Stephanette looked about her with curiosity. Lifting her handsome best petticoat slightly, for it might have got injured, she entered the cabin, asked to see where I slept, — in a trough full of straw with a sheepskin over it, — looked at my big cloak hanging to the wall, my crook, and my gun. All of which amused her. "So this is where you live, my poor shepherd?" she said. "How bored you must be all alone. What do you do? What do you think about?" I had a great mind to answer, "Of you, my mistress," and I should n't have lied; but my trouble of mind was so great that I could n't so much as find a word. I think she noticed this and the mischievous creature took pleasure in doubling my embarrassment by her teasing. "And your sweetheart, shepherd; she comes to see you sometimes, does she not? I am sure she must be the golden kid, or that fairy Estrella who flits along the summits of the mountains." And she herself as she spoke to

me had quite the air of the fairy Estrella, with that pretty laugh from her head tossed back, and her haste to be off, which made her visit seem much like a vision. "Adieu, shepherd."

"Your servant, mistress." And away she went, with the empty baskets.

When she passed out of sight down the sloping path it seemed to me that the stones rolled away by the hoofs of the mule were falling, one by one, on my heart. I heard them a long, long time; and till late in the day I sat as if dozing, not daring to stir for fear lest my vision should leave me.

Towards evening, as the depths of the valleys were beginning to grow blue, and the creatures were pressing together and bleating to enter the fold, I heard myself called from below, and I saw our young lady, no longer laughing as before, but trembling with fear and cold and dampness. It seems she had found at the base of the slope the river Sorgue so swollen by the storm that, being determined to cross it, she came near getting drowned. The terrible part was that at that hour of the night there was no use attempting to return to the farm, because she never could have found her way by the cross-road all by herself, and, as for me, I could not leave my flock. The idea of passing the night on the mountain worried her greatly, especially on account of her people's anxiety. I soothed her as best I could. "The nights are so short in July, mistress — it is only a moment's trouble." And I lighted a big fire

quickly to dry her little feet and her gown all soaked in the river. After which I brought her some milk and cheese; but the poor little thing thought neither of warmth nor of food; and when I saw the big tears welling up in her eyes I wanted to cry myself.

And now the darkness was really coming. Nothing remained on the crest of the mountain but a dust of the sun, a vapour of light to the westward. I asked our young lady to enter and rest in the cabin; and then, having stretched a fine new sheepskin on a pile of fresh straw, I wished her good-night and went out to sit by myself before the door. God is my witness that, in spite of the fire of love that burned my blood, no evil thought came into my mind, — nothing but a great pride to think that in a corner of my hut, quite close to the flock that eyed her inquisitively, the daughter of my master, a lamb more precious and snow-white than they, was sleeping, intrusted to my care. Never did the heavens seem to me so deep, the stars so bright.

Suddenly the wicket opened and Stephanette appeared. She could not sleep. The creatures had crackled the straw as they moved, or else they were bleating as they dreamed. She preferred to come out to the fire. Seeing this I threw my goatskin round her shoulders and blew up a flame, and there we stayed, sitting side by side, without saying a word. If you have ever passed a night beneath the stars you know that during the hours when people sleep a mysterious

world wakes up in the solitude and silence. The springs sing clearer, the ponds are lighted by little flames. All the spirits of the mountain go and come freely; there 's rustling in the air, imperceptible noises as if we could hear the branches grow and the grass springing. Day is the life of beings, but night is the life of things. If you are not accustomed to it 't is alarming; and so our young lady shuddered and pressed against me at the slightest noise. Once a long, melancholy cry came from the pond that shone below us, rising in undulations. At the same instant a beautiful shooting star glided above our heads in the same direction, as if that plaint which we had just heard had brought light with it.

"What is that?" asked Stephanette in a whisper.

"A soul that enters paradise, my mistress," and I made the sign of the cross. She too crossed herself, and sat for a moment with her head turned upward to the sky, reflecting. Then she said to me: "Is it true, shepherd, that all of you are wizards?"

"Not so, mistress. But here we live closer to the stars, and we know what goes on among them better than the people of the plains."

She still looked upward, resting her head upon her hand, wrapped in the goatskin, like a little celestial shepherd. "How many there are! how beautiful! Never did I see so many. Do you know their names, shepherd?"

"Why, yes, mistress. . . See! just above us, that 's the *Path of Saint James* (the Milky Way).

It goes from France to Spain. 'T was Saint James of Galicia who marked it out to show the way to our brave Charlemagne when he made war upon the Saracens.[1] Farther on, there's the *Chariot of Souls* (Great Bear), with its four resplendent axles. The three stars before it are its *three steeds*, and the little one close to the third is the *charioteer*. Do you see that rain of stars falling over there? Those are the souls that the Good God won't have in heaven. . . Lower down there 's the *Rake* or the *Three Kings* (Orion). That serves us for a clock, us shepherds. Merely by looking at them now I know 't is past midnight. Still lower, over there to the southward, shines *John of Milan*, the torch of the stars (Sirius). Here 's what the shepherds say about that star: It seems that one night *John of Milan* with the *Three Kings* and the *Poucinière* (the Pleiad) were invited to the wedding of a star, a friend of theirs. The *Poucinière*, being in a hurry, started, they say, the first and took the upper road. Look at her, up there, in the depths of the sky. The *Three Kings* cut across and caught up with her, but that lazy *John of Milan*, who slept too late, stayed quite behind, and being furious, tried to stop them by flinging his stick. That 's why the *Three Kings* are sometimes called the *Stick of John of Milan*. . . But the most beautiful of all the stars, mistress, is ours, the *Shepherd's Star*, which lights us at dawn of day when we lead out the flock, and at night when we

[1] All these details of popular astronomy are translated from the "Provençal Almanach," published at Avignon.

gather it in. We call that star the *Maguelonne*, the beautiful Maguelonne which runs after *Pierre de Provence* (Saturn), and marries him every seven years."

"Why, shepherd! do stars really marry?"

"To be sure they do, mistress."

And as I tried to explain to her what such marriages were I felt something fresh and delicate lie softly on my shoulder. 'T was her head, weighed down by sleep, which rested upon me with a dainty rustle of ribbons and laces and waving hair. She stayed thus, never moving, till the stars in the sky grew pale, dimmed by the rising day. As for me, I looked at her sleeping, a little shaken in the depths of my being, but sacredly protected by that clear night, which has never given me any but noble thoughts. Around us the stars continued their silent way, docile as a flock, and at times I fancied that one of them, the most delicate, the most brilliant, had lost its way and had come down to rest upon my shoulder and sleep.

P. Ayrs

THE ARLESIAN GIRL.

GOING down from my mill to the village I pass a farmhouse built close to the road at the end of a great courtyard planted with hazel-trees. It is the true home of a Provençal farmer, with its red tiles, its broad brown front and irregular windows, and above, at the peak of the garret, a weather-vane, pulleys to hoist the forage, and a few tufts of hay caught in the transit.

Why did that house so affect me? Why did that closed portal seem to wring my heart? I could not have told why, and yet that home always gave me a chill. There was silence around it. When any one passed, the dogs did not bark, the guinea-fowls fled without screaming. Within, not a voice! Nothing, not so much as a mule-bell. If it were not for the white curtains at the windows and the smoke that rose from the roof, the place might have seemed uninhabited.

Yesterday, on the stroke of midday, I was returning from the village and, to escape the sun, I was hugging the walls of the farm in the shade of the hazel-trees. On the road, directly in front of the courtyard, silent serving-men were loading a waggon with hay. The gates were open. I cast

in a look as I passed, and I saw, at the farther end of the courtyard, his head in his hands and his elbows on a large stone table, a tall old man, white-headed, in a jacket too short for him, and ragged breeches. I stopped. One of the men said to me in a low voice: —

"Hush! 't is the master. He is like that since the misfortune of his son."

At this moment a woman and a little boy dressed in black, passed near to us carrying large gilt prayer-books, and entered the farmhouse.

The man added: —

"That 's the mistress and Cadet, returning from mass. They go there every day since the lad killed himself. Ah! monsieur, what desolation! The master still wears the dead boy's clothes; they can't make him quit them. *Dia! hue!* Gee up!"

The waggon started. I, who wanted to know more, asked the driver to let me get up beside him; and it was there, seated on the hay, that I heard this heart-breaking story.

He was called Jan. A fine young peasant, twenty years of age, virtuous as a girl, firm, with a frank face, and very handsome; so the women looked at him; but as for him he had only one woman in his head, — a little Arlesian girl, all velvet and laces, whom he met one day at Arles, on the Lice. At the farmhouse this acquaintance was not viewed, at first, with satisfaction. The girl was thought coquettish, and her parents were not of the neigh-

bourhood. But Jan wanted his Arlesian love with all his might. He said: —

"I shall die if they don't give her to me."

They had to come to it. It was settled that the marriage should take place after harvest.

One Sunday evening, in the large courtyard, the family were finishing dinner. It was almost a wedding-feast. The bride was not present, but toasts had been drunk in her honour. Suddenly a man appeared at the gate and asked, in a trembling voice, to speak to Maître Estève in private. Estève rose and went out upon the highway.

"Master," said the man, "you are marrying your son to a slut who has been my mistress for the last two years. What I say I prove; here are letters. Her parents knew all, and promised her to me, but since your son has courted her neither she nor her parents will have me. But I think, after that, she ought not to be the wife of another."

"Very well," said Maître Estève, after he had read the letters. "Come in, and drink a glass of muscat."

The man replied: —

"Thank you! no; I am more sorrowful than thirsty." And he went away.

The father returned, impassible. He resumed his place at the table, and the meal ended gayly.

That evening Maître Estève and his son went to walk in the fields. They were out a long time; when they returned the mother awaited them.

"Wife," said the farmer, leading his son to her. "Kiss him; he is very unhappy."

Jan never spoke again of his Arlesian girl. But he still loved her, and more than ever after she was shown to him in the arms of another. Only, he was too proud to speak of it; and it was that which killed him, poor lad! Sometimes he would spend whole days in a corner without moving. At other times he would dig with fury and do himself, alone, the work of ten labourers. But as soon as evening came he took the road to Arles; walking straight before him till he saw the slender spires of the town rise in the sunset glow. Then he returned. Never did he go any farther.

Seeing him thus, always sad and solitary, the people of the farmhouse knew not what to do. They feared some danger. Once, at table, his mother, looking at him with eyes full of tears, said: —

"Listen, Jan, if you wish for her all the same, we will give her to you."

The father, red with shame, lowered his head.

Jan made sign of refusal and went away.

From that day forth he changed his way of living, affecting to be gay in order to reassure his parents. He was seen once more at balls, in the wine-shops, at the races. At the election in Fonvieille it was he who led the *farandole*.

The father said: "He is cured." The mother still had fears and watched her child more than ever. Jan slept with Cadet close to the silk-worm attic; the poor old woman had her bed made up beside their chamber, — the silk-worms might need her, she said.

And now came the fête of Saint-Éloi, the patron of farmers.

Great joy at the farmhouse. There was châteauneuf for every one, and boiled wine seemed to rain. Then, fire-crackers and fire-barrels, and coloured lanterns in the hazel trees. Vive Saint-Éloi! They farandoled to death. Cadet burned his new blouse. Jan himself seemed happy; he insisted on making his mother dance, and the poor woman wept with joy.

By midnight they all went to bed. They needed sleep. Jan did not sleep, and Cadet said the next day he had sobbed all night. Ah! I tell you he was deeply bitten, that lad.

The next day, at dawn, the mother heard some one cross her room running. She had a presentiment.

"Jan, is that you?"

Jan did not answer; he was already on the stairway.

Quick, quick the mother rose.

"Jan, where are you going?"

He ran to the hayloft; she followed him.

"My son, for God's sake!"

He closed the door and bolted it.

"Jan, my little Jan! answer! What are you doing?"

Her old hands, trembling, felt for the latch. A window opened, the sound of a fall was heard on the stones of the courtyard, and that was all.

He had said to himself, poor lad: "I love her too much — I must go."

Ah! miserable hearts that we have! And yet, it is hard that contempt is unable to kill love.

That morning the people in the village wondered who it was that cried out so terribly down there, toward the Estève farm.

In the courtyard, before the stone table, all covered with dew and blood, the mother, naked, sat lamenting with her dead boy in her arms.

THE POPE'S MULE.

OF all the pretty sayings, proverbs, adages, with which our Provençal peasantry decorate their discourse, I know of none more picturesque, or more peculiar than this: — for fifteen leagues around my mill, when they speak of a spiteful and vindictive man, they say: "That fellow! distrust him! he 's like the Pope's mule who kept her kick for seven years."

I tried for a long time to find out whence that proverb came, what that Pope's mule was, and why she kept her kick for seven years. No one could give me any information on the subject, not even Francet Mamaï, my old fife-player, though he knows his Provençal legends to the tips of his fingers. Francet thought, as I did, that there must be some ancient chronicle of Avignon behind it, but he had never heard of it otherwise than as a proverb.

"You won't find it anywhere except in the Grasshoppers' Library," said the old man, laughing.

The idea struck me as a good one; and as the Grasshoppers' Library is close at my door, I shut myself up there for over a week.

It is a wonderful library, admirably stocked, open to poets night and day, and served by little

librarians with cymbals who make music for you all the time. I spent some delightful days there, and after a week of researches (on my back) I ended by discovering what I wanted, namely: the story of the mule and that famous kick which she kept for seven years. The tale is pretty, though rather naïve, and I shall try to tell it to you just as I read it yesterday in a manuscript coloured by the weather, smelling of good dried lavender and tied with the Virgin's threads — as they call gossamer in these parts.

Whoso did not see Avignon in the days of the Popes has seen nothing. For gayety, life, animation, the excitement of festivals, never was a town like it. From morning till night there was nothing but processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers, draped with tapestries, cardinals arriving by the Rhone, banners in the breeze, galleys dressed in flags, the Pope's soldiers chanting Latin on the squares, and the tinkling rattle of the begging friars; while from garret to cellar of houses that pressed, humming, round the great papal palace like bees around their hive, came the tick-tack of lace-looms, the to-and-fro of shuttles weaving the gold thread of chasubles, the tap-tap of the goldsmith's chasing-tools tapping on the chalices, the tuning of choir-instruments at the lute-makers, the songs of the spinners at their work; and above all this rose the sound of bells, and always the echo of certain tambourines coming from away down there on the bridge of Avignon.

Because, with us, when the people are happy they must dance — they must dance; and as in those days the streets were too narrow for the *farandole*, fifes and tambourines posted themselves on the bridge of Avignon in the fresh breeze of the Rhone, and day and night folks danced, they danced. Ah! the happy times! the happy town! Halberds that did not wound, prisons where the wine was put to cool; no hunger, no war. That's how the Popes of the Comtat governed their people; and that's why their people so deeply regretted them.

There was one Pope especially, a good old man called Boniface. Ah! that one, many were the tears shed in Avignon when he was dead. He was so amiable, so affable a prince! He laughed so merrily on the back of his mule! And when you passed him, were you only a poor little gatherer of madder-roots, or the grand provost of the town, he gave you his benediction so politely! A real Pope of Yvetot, but a Yvetot of Provence, with something delicate in his laugh, a sprig of sweet marjoram in his cardinal's cap, and never a Jeanneton, — the only Jeanneton he was ever known to have, that good Father, was his vineyard, his own little vineyard which he planted himself, three leagues from Avignon, among the myrtles of Château-Neuf.

Every Sunday, after vespers, the good man paid court to his vineyard; and when he was up there, sitting in the blessed sun, his mule near him, his cardinals stretched out beneath the grapevines,

he would order a flask of the wine of his own growth to be opened, — that beautiful wine, the colour of rubies, which is now called the *Chateau-Neuf des Papes*, and he sipped it with sips, gazing at his vineyard tenderly. Then, the flask empty, the day fading, he rode back joyously to town, the Chapter following; and when he crossed the bridge of Avignon through the tambourines and the *farandoles*, his mule, set going by the music, paced along in a skipping little amble, while he himself beat time to the dance with his cap, which greatly scandalized the cardinals but made the people say: "Ah! the good prince! Ah! the kind Pope!"

What the Pope loved best in the world, next to his vineyard of Château-Neuf, was his mule. The good man doted on that animal. Every evening before he went to bed he went to see if the stable was locked, if nothing was lacking in the manger; and never did he rise from table without seeing with his own eyes the preparation of a great bowl of wine in the French fashion with sugar and spice, which he took to his mule himself, in spite of the remarks of his cardinals. It must be said that the animal was worth the trouble. She was a handsome black mule, with reddish points, sure-footed, hide shining, back broad and full, carrying proudly her thin little head decked out with pompons and ribbons, silver bells and streamers; gentle as an angel withal, innocent eyes, and two long ears, always shaking, which gave her the look of a down-

right good fellow. All Avignon respected her, and when she passed through the streets there were no civilities that the people did not pay her; for every one knew there was no better way to stand well at court, and that the Pope's mule, for all her innocent look, had led more than one man to fortune, — witness Tistet Védène and his amazing adventure.

This Tistet Védène was, in point of fact, an impudent young rogue, whom his father, Guy Védène, the goldsmith, had been forced to turn out of his house, because he would not work and only debauched the apprentices. For six months Tistet dragged his jacket through all the gutters of Avignon, but principally those near the papal palace; for the rascal had a notion in his head about the Pope's mule, and you shall now see what mischief was in it.

One day when his Holiness was riding all alone beneath the ramparts, behold our Tistet approaching him and saying, with his hands clasped in admiration: —

"Ah! *mon Dieu*, Holy Father, what a fine mule you are riding! Just let me look at her. Ah! Pope, what a mule! The Emperor of Germany has n't her equal."

And he stroked her and spoke to her softly as if to a pretty young lady: —

"Come here, my treasure, my jewel, my pearl —"

And the good Pope, quite touched, said to himself: —

"What a nice young fellow; how kind he is to my mule!"

And the next day what do you think happened? Tistet Védène changed his yellow jacket for a handsome lace alb, a purple silk hood, shoes with buckles; and he entered the household of the Pope, where no one had ever yet been admitted but sons of nobles and nephews of cardinals. That's what intriguing means! But Tistet was not satisfied with that.

Once in the Pope's service, the rascal continued the game he had played so successfully. Insolent to every one, he showed attentions and kindness to none but the mule, and he was always to be met with in the courtyards of the palace with a handful of oats, or a bunch of clover, shaking its pink blooms at the window of the Holy Father as if to say: "Hein! who 's that for, hey?" Time and again this happened, so that, at last, the good Pope, who felt himself getting old, left to Tistet the care of looking after the stable and of carrying to the mule his bowl of wine, — which did not cause the cardinals to laugh.

Nor the mule either. For now, at the hour her wine was due she beheld half a dozen little pages of the household slipping hastily into the hay with their hoods and their laces; and then, soon after, a good warm smell of caramel and spices pervaded the stable, and Tistet Védène appeared bearing carefully the bowl of hot wine. Then the poor animal's martyrdom began.

That fragrant wine she loved, which kept her warm and gave her wings, they had the cruelty to bring it into her stall and let her smell of it; then, when her nostrils were full of the perfume, away! and the beautiful rosy liquor went down the throats of those young scamps! And not only did they steal her wine, but they were like devils, those young fellows, after they had drunk it. One pulled her ears, another her tail. Quiquet jumped on her back, Béluguet put his hat on her head, and not one of the rascals ever thought that with one good kick of her hind-legs the worthy animal could send them all to the polar star, and farther still if she chose. But no! you are not the Pope's mule for nothing — that mule of benedictions and plenary indulgences. The lads might do what they liked, she was never angry with them; it was only Tistet Védène whom she hated. He, indeed! when she felt him behind her, her hoofs itched; and reason enough too. That good-for-nothing Tistet played her such villanous tricks. He had such cruel ideas and inventions after drinking.

One day he took it into his head to make her go with him into the belfry, high up, very high up, to the peak of the palace! What I am telling you is no tale; two hundred thousand Provençal men and women saw it. Imagine the terror of that unfortunate mule, when, after turning for an hour, blindly, round a corkscrew staircase and climbing I don't know how many steps, she found herself all of a sudden on a platform blazing with light, while a thousand feet below her she saw a

diminutive Avignon, the booths in the market no bigger than nuts, the Pope's soldiers moving about their barrack like little red ants, and down there, bright as a silver thread, a microscopic little bridge on which they were dancing, dancing. Ah! poor beast! what a panic! At the cry she gave, all the windows of the palace shook.

"What's the matter? what are they doing to my mule?" cried the good Pope, rushing out upon his balcony.

Tistet Védène was already in the courtyard pretending to weep and tear his hair.

"Ah! great Holy Father, what's the matter, indeed! *Mon Dieu!* what will become of us? There's your mule gone up to the belfry."

"All alone?"

"Yes, great Holy Father, all alone. Look up there, high up. Don't you see the tips of her ears pointing out — like two swallows?"

"Mercy!" cried the poor Pope, raising his eyes. "Why, she must have gone mad! She'll kill herself! Come down, come down, you luckless thing!"

Pécaïre! she wanted nothing so much as to come down; but how? which way? The stairs? not to be thought of; they can be mounted, those things; but as for going down! why, they are enough to break one's legs a hundred times. The poor mule was in despair, and while circling round and round the platform with her big eyes full of vertigo she thought of Tistet Védène.

"Ah! bandit, if I only escape — what a kick to-morrow morning!"

That idea of a kick put some courage into her heart; without it she never could have held good. . . At last, they managed to save her; but 'twas quite a serious affair. They had to get her down with a derrick, ropes, and a sling. You can fancy what humiliation it was for a Pope's mule to see herself suspended at that height, her four hoofs swimming in the void like a cockchafer hanging to a string. And all Avignon looking at her!

The unfortunate beast could not sleep at night. She fancied she was still turning round and round that cursèd platform while the town laughed below, and again she thought of the infamous Tistet and the fine kick of her heels she would let fly at him next day. Ah! friends, what a kick! the dust of it would be seen as far as Pampérigouste.

Now, while this notable reception was being made ready for him in the Pope's stable what do you think Tistet Védène was about? He was descending the Rhone on a papal galley, singing as he went his way to the Court of Naples with a troop of young nobles whom the town of Avignon sent every year to Queen Jeanne to practise diplomacy and fine manners. Tistet Védène was not noble; but the Pope was bent on rewarding him for the care he had given to his mule, and especially for the activity he displayed in saving her from her perilous situation.

The mule was the disappointed party on the morrow!

"Ah! the bandit! he suspected something," she thought, shaking her silver bells. "No matter for

that, scoundrel; you 'll find it when you get back, that kick; I 'll keep it for you!"

And she kept it for him.

After Tistet's departure the Pope's mule returned to her tranquil way of life and her usual proceedings. No more Quiquet, no more Béluguet in the stable. The good old days of the spiced wine came back, and with them good-humour, long siestas, and the little gavotte step as she crossed the bridge of Avignon. Nevertheless, since her adventure a certain coldness was shown to her in the town. Whisperings were heard as she passed, old people shook their heads, children laughed and pointed to the belfry. The good Pope himself no longer had quite the same confidence in his friend, and when he let himself go into a nice little nap on her back of a Sunday, returning from his vineyard, he always had this thought latent in his mind: "What if I should wake up there on the platform!" The mule felt this, and she suffered, but said nothing; only, whenever the name of Tistet Védène was uttered in her hearing, her long ears quivered, and she struck the iron of her shoes hard upon the pavement with a little snort.

Seven years went by. Then, at the end of those seven years, Tistet Védène returned from the Court of Naples. His time was not yet finished over there, but he had heard that the Pope's head mustard-bearer had died suddenly at Avignon, and as the place seemed a good one, he hurried back in haste to solicit it.

When this intriguing Védène entered the pal-

ace the Holy Father did not recognize him, he had grown so tall and so stout. It must also be said that the good Pope himself had grown older, and could not see much without spectacles.

Tistet was not abashed.

"What, great Holy Father! you don't remember me? It is I, Tistet Védène."

"Védène?"

"Why, yes, you know the one that took the wine to your mule."

"Ah! yes, yes, — I remember. A good little fellow, that Tistet Védène! And now, what do you want of me?"

"Oh! very little, great Holy Father. I came to ask — By the bye, have you still got her, that mule of yours? Is she well? Ah! good! I came to ask you for the place of the chief mustard-bearer who lately died."

"Mustard-bearer, you! Why you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two, illustrious pontiff; just five years older than your mule. Ah! palm of God, what a fine beast she is! If you only knew how I love her, that mule, — how I pined for her in Italy! Won't you let me see her?"

"Yes, my son, you shall see her," said the worthy Pope, quite touched. "And as you love her so much I must have you live near her. Therefore, from this day I attach you to my person as chief mustard-bearer. My cardinals will cry out, but no matter! I 'm used to that. Come and see me to-morrow, after vespers, and you

shall receive the insignia of your rank in presence of the whole Chapter, and then I will show you the mule and you shall go to the vineyard with us, hey! hey!"

I need not tell you if Tistet Védène was content when he left the palace, and with what impatience he awaited the ceremony of the morrow. And yet there was one more impatient and more content than he: it was the mule. After Védène's return, until vespers on the following day that terrible animal never ceased to stuff herself with oats, and practise her heels on the wall behind her. She, too, was preparing for the ceremony.

Well, on the morrow, when vespers were said, Tistet Védène made his entry into the papal courtyard. All the grand clergy were there; the cardinals in their red robes, the devil's advocate in black velvet, the convent abbots in their small mitres, the wardens of Saint-Agrico, the violet hoods of the Pope's household, the lower clergy also, the Pope's guard in full uniform, the three penitential brotherhoods, the hermits of Mont-Ventoux, with their sullen faces, and the little clerk who walks behind them with a bell, the flagellating friars naked to the waist, the ruddy sextons in judge's gowns, all, all, down to the givers of holy water, and the man who lights and him who puts out the candles — not one was missing. Ah! 't was a fine ordination! Bells, fire-crackers, sunshine, music, and always those frantic tambourines leading the *farandole* over there, on the bridge.

When Védène appeared in the midst of this

great assembly, his fine bearing and handsome face sent a murmur of admiration through the crowd. He was truly a magnificent Provençal; but of the blond type, with thick hair curling at the tips, and a dainty little beard, that looked like slivers of fine metal fallen from the chisel of his father, the goldsmith. The rumour ran that the fingers of Queen Jeanne had sometimes played in the curls of that golden beard; and, in truth, the Sieur de Védène had the self-glorifying air and the abstracted look of men that queens have loved. On this day, in order to do honour to his native town, he had substituted for his Neapolitan clothes a tunic edged with pink, *à la Provençale*, and in his hood there quivered a tall feather of the Camargue ibis.

As soon as he entered the new official bowed with a gallant air, and approached the high portico where the Pope was waiting to give him the insignias of his rank, namely, a wooden spoon and a saffron coat. The mule was at the foot of the steps, saddled and bridled, all ready to go to the vineyard; as he passed beside her, Tistet Védène smiled pleasantly, and stopped to give her a friendly pat or two on the back, glancing, as he did so, out of the corner of his eye to see if the Pope noticed it. The position was just right, — the mule let fly her heels.

"There, take it, villain! Seven years have I kept it for thee!"

And she gave him so terrible a kick, — so terrible that even at Pampérigouste the smoke was

seen, a whirlwind of blond dust, in which flew the feather of an ibis, and that was all that remained of the unfortunate Tistet Védène!

Mule kicks are not usually so destructive; but this was a papal mule; and then, just think! she had kept it for him for seven years. There is no finer example of ecclesiastical rancour.

THE LIGHTHOUSE.

THAT night I could not sleep. The mistral was angry, and the roar of its great voice kept me awake till morning. The mill cracked, heavily swaying its mutilated wings, which whistled to the north wind like the shrouds of a ship. Tiles flew off the roof, and, afar, the serried pines with which the hill is covered waved and rustled in the shadows. I might have thought myself on the open sea. . .

All this reminded me of my beautiful insomnias three years ago, when I lived in the *phare des Sanguinaires* [lighthouse of the Sanguinaires], down there, off the Corsican coast, at the entrance of the gulf of Ajaccio, — one more pretty corner that I have found in which to dream and live alone.

Imagine a ruddy isle, savage of aspect; the lighthouse on one point, on the other an old Genoese tower, where, in my day, lived an eagle. Below, on the shore, was a ruined lazaretto, overgrown with herbage; and everywhere ravines, clusters of great rocks, a few wild goats, the little Corsican horses galloping about, their manes streaming in the wind; and above, far above, in a whirl of sea-birds, the house of the beacon, with its

platform of white masonry where the keepers walk up and down, its green arched doorway, and its cast-iron tower, at the top of which the great lantern with facets shines in the sun, giving light by day as well as by night. . . That is the Île des Sanguinaires, as I saw it again this wakeful night, while I listened to the snoring of my pines. It was in that enchanted isle that I shut myself up at times, before I came to my mill, when I needed the free air and solitude.

What did I do there?

Just what I do here, only less. When the mistral or the tramontana did not blow too hard, I lay between two rocks at the sea-level, amid the gulls and the petrels and the swallows, and there I stayed nearly all day long in that species of stupor and delightful dejection which comes with the contemplation of the sea. You know, don't you, that lovely intoxication of the soul? We do not think, we do not dream. All our being escapes us, flits away, is scattered. We are the gull that dives, the dust of foam that floats in the sunlight between two waves, the vapour of that steamer over there in the distance, that pretty little coral-boat with its ruddy sail, that pearl of the water, that flake of mist, — all, we are all, except ourself. Oh! what precious hours of semi-slumber and self-dispersion have I spent upon my island!

On the strong windy days when the shore was not tenable, I shut myself up in the quarantine courtyard, a melancholy little courtyard, fragrant with rosemary and wild absinthe; and there,

crouching in a projection of the old wall, I let myself be softly invaded by the vague essence of loneliness and sadness which floated with the sunshine into those stone cells, open at one end like ancient tombs. From time to time a gate would clap, a light spring bound upon the grass; 't was a goat coming in to browse under shelter from the wind. When she saw me she stopped abashed, and stood still, horns erect, air alert, looking at me with an infantine eye.

Toward five o'clock the trumpet of the keepers called me to dinner. Then I took a little path through the tangle of rock overhanging the sea, and went slowly up to the lighthouse, turning at every step to that vast horizon of water and light which seemed to enlarge the higher I went.

Above, it was charming. I still see that beautiful dining-room with broad tiles and oak panels, the *bouillabaisse* smoking in the middle of it, the door wide open to the white terrace, and the whole setting sun pouring in. The keepers were there, waiting until I came to sit down to table. There were three of them, a Marseillais and two Corsicans; all were small men, bearded, their faces tanned, fissured; wearing the same *pelone* — short, hooded cloak of goatskin — but each man had a gait and a temperament unlike the others.

By the way these men moved, one could instantly feel the difference between the two races. The Marseillais, industrious and lively, always busy, always in motion, roved the isle from morn-

ing till night, gardening, fishing, gathering the gulls' eggs, hiding in the rocks to catch a goat and milk her, and always with some *aioli* or *bouillabaisse* a-cooking.

The Corsicans, on the other hand, beyond their regular service, did absolutely nothing. They considered themselves functionaries, and passed their days in the kitchen playing interminable games of *scopa*, never interrupting them except to relight their pipes with a grave air, and to cut up into the hollow of their hands, with scissors, the big green tobacco-leaves.

In other respects, Marseillais and Corsicans, they were all three good fellows, simple, artless, full of attentions for their guest, though in their hearts they must have thought him a very extraordinary gentleman.

Just think! to come and shut himself up in a lighthouse for pleasure! They, who found the days so long, and felt so happy when their turn came to go ashore. In the summer season this great happiness was allowed them once a month. Ten days ashore for thirty days of lighthouse; that is the rule; but in winter and bad weather no rule holds good. The wind blows, the waves rise, the Sanguinaires are white with foam, and the keepers on duty are kept confined for two or three months together, and sometimes under terrible conditions.

"Here's what happened to me, monsieur," said old Bartoli one day as we were dining. "Here's what happened to me five years ago of a winter's

evening, at this very table where we are now. That night there were only two of us in the lighthouse, I and a comrade called Tchéco. The others were ashore, ill, or on their holiday, I forget which. We were finishing dinner, very quietly, when, all of a sudden, my comrade stopped eating, looked at me for a moment with such queer eyes, and, poof! he fell upon the table his arms stretched out. I ran to him, shook him, called him: —

"'O Tché! O Tché!'

"Not a word! he was dead. You can think what emotion. I stood more than an hour stupid and trembling before that corpse, then suddenly the thought came to me — the beacon! I had only time to climb to the lantern and light it before night fell. And what a night, monsieur! The sea, the wind did not have their natural voices. Every second it seemed to me that some one called me from below. And such fever! such thirst! But you could n't have made me go down — I was so frightened of death. However, by dawn, a little courage came back to me. I carried my comrade to his bed; a sheet above him, a bit of a prayer, and then, quick! the danger signal.

"Unfortunately, the sea ran high; in vain I called, called; no one came. And there I was, alone in the lighthouse with my poor Tchéco for God knows how long. I hoped to be able to keep him near me till the arrival of the boat; but after three days that was impossible. What should I do? Carry him outside? Bury him? The rock was too hard, and there are so many crows on the island. It

would have been a shame to abandon that Christian to their maws. Then I bethought me of taking him down to one of those cells of the lazaretto. It took me a whole afternoon to make that sad procession, and, I tell you, it needed courage, too. Do you know, monsieur, that even now when I go down on that side of the island in a high wind I fancy that I still have that corpse on my shoulders."

Poor old Bartoli! the perspiration stood out on his forehead for merely thinking of it.

Our meals were passed in chatting thus: the beacon, the sea, with tales of shipwreck and of Corsican pirates. Then as daylight faded, the keeper of the first watch lighted his lamp, took his pipe, his flask, a little red-edged Plutarch (the entire library of the Sanguinaires) and disappeared in the darkness. In a minute we heard in the depths below a rattle of chains and pulleys, and the heavy weights of a clock that was being wound up.

As for me during this time, I sat outside on the terrace. The sun, now very low, was descending quickly into the water, carrying the horizon with it. The wind freshened, the island became violet. In the sky, a big bird passed heavily quite near me; it was the eagle of the tower coming home. Little by little the sea-mist rose. Soon I could see only the white fringe round the isle. Suddenly, above my head, a soft flood of light gushed out. 'T was the beacon. Leaving the rest of the island in shadow, the clear broad ray fell full upon the water, and I was lost in darkness below that

luminous great flood, which scarcely spattered me in passing. . . But the wind is freshening still. I must go in. Feeling my way I enter and close the great door. I put up the iron bars; then, still feeling before me, I go up the cast-iron stairway, which trembles and sounds beneath my feet; and thus I reach the summit of the lighthouse. Here indeed is brilliancy.

Imagine a gigantic Carcel lamp with six rows of wicks, around which slowly revolve the sides of the lantern; some are filled with an enormous lens of crystal, others open on a stationary sash of glass which shelters the flame from the breeze. On entering, I was dazzled. The brasses, pewters, tin reflectors, the walls of convex crystal turning with those great bluish circles, all this glitter and clash of lights gave me a moment of giddiness.

Little by little, however, my eyes grew accustomed to the glare, and I seated myself at the foot of the lamp beside the keeper, who was reading his Plutarch aloud to keep himself from going to sleep.

Without, darkness, the abyss. On the little balcony which runs round the lantern the wind is rushing like a madman, howling. The lighthouse cracks, the sea roars. At the point of the isle, on the reefs, the waves make a noise like cannon. Invisible fingers rap now and then on the glass — some night-bird, allured by the light, which beats out its brains on the crystal. Within the warm and sparkling lantern nothing is heard but the crackling of the flame, the sound of the oil dropping, of the chain winding, and the monotonous

voice of the reader intoning the life of Demetrius of Phalaris.

At midnight the keeper rises, casts a final look at his wicks, and we both go down. On the stairway we meet the comrade of the second watch, who is coming up, rubbing his eyes. We pass him the flask and the Plutarch. Then before we seek our beds we go for a moment to the lower chamber, encumbered with chains, heavy weights, reserves of tin, of cordage, and there, by the gleam of his little lamp the keeper writes in the big book of the beacon, the log, always open: —

"Midnight. Heavy sea. Tempest. Ship in the offing."

THE WRECK OF THE "SÉMILLANTE."

As the mistral of the other night cast us on the Corsican coast let me tell you a terrible tale of the sea which the fishermen over there often relate in their night watches, and about which chance supplied me with very curious information.

It was two or three years ago that I was roving the Sea of Sardinia with six or seven custom-house sailors. A rough trip for a novice. Throughout the month of March we had but one fine day. The east wind pursued us and the sea never ceased to rage.

One night that we were running before the gale, our boat took shelter among a crowd of little islands at the entrance to the Straits of Bonifacio. The aspect of those islands was not engaging: great barren rocks covered with birds, a few tufts of absinthe, thickets of mastic-trees, and here and there in the swamps logs of wood in process of rotting. But for passing the night, i' faith those dangerous-looking rocks seemed safer than the cabin of a half-decked old boat where the sea entered as if it were at home; and so we were quite contented to go ashore.

We had barely landed and the sailors were lighting a fire to cook the *bouillabaisse*, when the skip-

per called me, and, said pointing to a little inclosure of white masonry almost hidden in the fog at the end of the island: —

"Will you come to the cemetery?"

"Cemetery, Captain Lionetti! Where are we, then?"

"At the Lavezzi Islands, monsieur. This is where the six hundred men of the 'Sémillante' are buried, exactly where their frigate was wrecked just ten years ago. Poor fellows! they don't have many visitors, and the least we can do is to say good-day to them, now we are here."

"With all my heart, captain."

How sad it was, that cemetery of the "Sémillante!" I see it still with its little low wall, its rusty iron door, hard to open, its silent chapel, and its hundreds of black crosses half-hidden by the grass. Not a crown of *immortelles*, not a souvenir! nothing. Ah! the poor abandoned dead, how cold they must be in those chance graves.

We remained a few moments on our knees. The skipper prayed aloud. Enormous gulls, sole guardians of the cemetery, circled above our heads, mingling their hoarse cries with the lamentations of the ocean.

The prayer ended, we returned sadly to the end of the island, where our boat was moored. During our absence the sailors had not lost their time. We found a great fire flaming in the shelter of a rock, and a smoking sauce-pan. Every one sat down in a circle, his feet to the flame, and each

received in a red earthen bowl two slices of black bread thoroughly steeped. The meal was silent; we were wet, we were hungry, and then, the neighbourhood of the cemetery! . . However, when the bowls were empty we lighted our pipes, and talk began. Naturally we spoke of the "Sémillante."

"But how did it happen?" I asked the skipper, who was gazing at the flames with a pensive air, his head in his hands.

"How did it happen?" replied the good Lionetti with a heavy sigh. "Alas! monsieur, no one in the world can tell you that. All we know is that the 'Sémillante,' carrying troops to the Crimea, sailed from Toulon one evening in bad weather. It grew worse at night. Wind, rain, and a sea the like of which was never seen. Towards morning the wind fell a little but the sea was wild, and with it a devilish cursèd fog in which you could n't see a light at four steps off. Those fogs, monsieur, you have no idea how treacherous they are. But for all that, my idea of the 'Sémillante' is that she lost her rudder that morning, for there 's no fog that holds on without lifting a little, and that captain of hers would have seen enough not to lay himself out on these rocks. He was an old salt and we all knew him. He had commanded the Corsica Station for three years and knew the coast as well as I who know nothing else."

"What time of day is it thought that the 'Sémillante' perished?"

"It must have been midday; yes, monsieur, just

midday. But goodness! with that sea-fog midday was no better than midnight. A custom-house man ashore told me that about half-past eleven on that day, coming out of his hut to fasten the shutters, his cap was carried off by the wind, and at the risk of being blown himself into the sea he scrambled after it along the shore on his hands and knees. You understand! custom-house folks are not rich, and caps cost dear. It seems that once when he raised his head he saw, quite close to him in the fog, a big ship under bare poles running before the wind toward the Lavezzi Islands. She went so fast, so fast that the man had scarcely time to see her. But every one believes she was the 'Sémillante,' for half an hour later a shepherd found her lying on these rocks. And here he is, monsieur, that shepherd, just as I am speaking of him, and he will tell you the thing himself. Good-day, Palombo! come and warm yourself a bit; don't be afraid."

A man in a hooded mantle whom I had noticed for the last few minutes hovering around our fire, and whom I thought to be one of the crew, being ignorant that a shepherd was on the island, now came forward timidly.

He was a leprous old fellow, three-quarters idiotic, the victim of some scorbutic disease which gave him thick swollen lips very horrible to see. The skipper made him understand with difficulty what we wanted of him, and then, raising with one finger his diseased lip, the old man related how on the day in question, being in his hut about midday,

he heard an awful crash upon the rocks. As the island was covered with water he could not leave the hut, and it was not until the next day that, on opening his door, he saw the shore piled up with wreckage and with corpses washed in by the sea. Horrified, he ran to his boat and went to Bonifacio in search of help.

Tired with having talked so much the shepherd sat down, and the skipper resumed the tale:—

"Yes, monsieur, that poor old fellow came to warn us. He was almost crazy with terror, and ever since then his brain has been off the track — and good reason, too. Imagine six hundred bodies in a heap on that beach, pell-mell with splintered woodwork and rags of sail. Poor 'Sémillante'! the sea had crushed her at one blow and torn her to such fragments that Palombo could scarcely find enough to build him a fence around his hut. As for the bodies, they were nearly all disfigured and horribly mutilated; it was piteous to see them grappling to one another. We found the captain in full uniform, and the chaplain with his stole round his neck; in a corner between two rocks, was a little cabin-boy with his eyes wide open; you might have thought he was alive, but no! It was written above that no one should escape — "

Here the skipper interrupted himself.

"Attention, Nardi!" he cried; "the fire is going out."

Nardi thereupon threw two or three tarred

planks upon the embers, which flamed up brightly, and Lionetti continued: —

"The saddest part of the whole story is this: Three weeks before the disaster a little corvette, on her way, like the 'Sémillante,' to the Crimea, was wrecked in the same way and almost at the same spot; only, that time we succeeded in saving the crew and twenty artillery men who were aboard. We took them to Bonifacio and kept them two days. But once dry and afoot, good-night and good-luck! the artillery men returned to Toulon, where, soon after, they were again embarked for the Crimea — guess on what ship? On the 'Sémillante' monsieur! We found them all, the whole twenty, lying among the dead just about where we now are. I myself picked up a pretty little corporal with a delicate moustache, a Paris dandy, whom I had had in my own house and who had kept us laughing the whole time with his tales. To see him lying here, dead, almost broke my heart. Ah! Santa Madre!"

Thereupon the worthy Lionetti, shaking the ashes from his pipe and rolling himself up in his hooded cloak wished me good-night. For some time longer the sailors talked together in low tones. Then, one after another, the pipes went out. No one spoke. The old shepherd went away. And I was left alone to dream in the midst of the sleeping crew.

Under the impression of the lugubrious tale I have just heard, I try to reconstruct in thought

the poor lost frigate and the story of the death-throes that the gulls alone had witnessed. Certain details which have struck my mind — the captain in full uniform, the chaplain's stole, the twenty artillery men — help me to divine the various vicissitudes of the drama. . . I see the frigate leaving Toulon at dusk . . . she comes out into the offing. The sea is rough, the wind terrible; but the captain is a valiant sailor, and every one aboard is confident. . .

In the morning the sea-fog rises. Uneasiness is felt. The crew are aloft. The captain does not quit the bridge. Below, where the soldiers are shut up, it is dark; the atmosphere is hot. Some are ill, lying with their heads upon their knapsacks. The ship rolls horribly; impossible to keep their feet. They talk as they sit, in groups on the floor, and clinging to the benches; they shout in order to be heard. A few are beginning to feel afraid. Shipwrecks are so frequent in these latitudes; the artillery men are there to say so, and what they tell is not reassuring. Their corporal especially, a Parisian, always jesting, though he makes your flesh creep with his jokes.

"Shipwreck? why, it is very amusing, a shipwreck. We shall get off with an icy bath, and they'll take us to Bonifacio; capital eating at old Lionetti's."

And his comrades laugh.

Suddenly, a crash. What's that? What has happened?

"The rudder has gone," says a dripping sailor, crossing between decks at a run.

"Bon voyage!" cries that incorrigible corporal, but no one laughs with him now.

Great tumult on deck. The fog obstructs all view. The sailors go and come, frightened, and feeling their way. . . No rudder! Impossible to work the ship! The "Sémillante," drifting, goes with the wind. It is then that the custom-house sailor sees her pass; it is half-past eleven o'clock. Ahead of the frigate something sounds like the roar of cannon. . . Breakers! breakers! 'T is over, all hope is gone, they are driving ashore. The captain goes down into his cabin. The next moment he returns to his place on the bridge, wearing his full uniform. He will meet death with dignity.

Between decks the soldiers look at one another anxiously, but say nothing. The sick ones try to rise; the corporal laughs no longer. It is then that the door opens and the chaplain in his stole appears upon the threshold.

"Kneel down, my sons."

They all obey. In a ringing voice the priest reads the prayer for the dying.

Suddenly an awful shock, a cry, a single cry, an immense cry, arms stretched out, hands that clutch, eyes aghast, o'er which the vision of death passes in a flash —

Oh, mercy! . .

It was thus that I spent the whole night in dreaming, in evoking, after a space of ten years, the soul

of that poor ship whose fragments surrounded me. Afar, in the straits, the storm was raging; the flame of the bivouac bent to the blast! and I heard our boat tossing below at the foot of the rocks and straining at her hawser.

CUSTOM-HOUSE PEOPLE.

A FEW years ago, the inspector-general of customs in Corsica took me on one of his rounds along the coast. Without seeming to be so, it was really a very long voyage. Forty days at sea, almost as long as it takes to go to Havana, and this in an old boat with a half-deck where nothing sheltered us from wind, waves, and rain but a little tarred roof scarcely large enough to cover two berths and a table. It was a sight to see the sailors in bad weather. Their faces streamed; their soaked jackets smoked like linen in the drying-room. In mid-winter the poor fellows passed whole days in this condition, and even nights, crouched on their wet benches, shivering in that unhealthy dampness; for it was quite impossible to light a fire on board and the shore was sometimes difficult to reach. Well, not a single one of those men complained. In the roughest weather I always saw them just as placid, and in just the same good-humour. And yet, what a melancholy life it is, that of custom-house sailors!

Nearly all of them are married, with wife and children ashore, yet they stay months at sea, cruising

around those dangerous coasts. By way of food they have nothing but damp bread and wild onions. Never wine or meat, for wine and meat cost dear and all they earn is five hundred francs a year. Five hundred francs a year! you can imagine what the hovel must be on the Marina and whether the children go barefoot. No matter! they all seem happy, those people. In front of the cabin, aft, stood a great cask of rain-water, at which the crew drank; and I remember that when they had taken their last swallow, each of the poor devils shook out his glass with an "Ah!" of satisfaction, an expression of comfort both comical and affecting.

The gayest and most contented of all was a little Bonifacian, squat and swarthy, called Palombo. He was always singing, even in the worst weather. When the waves were high and the sky, dark and lowering, was full of sleet, and all were standing, their noses in the air, hands to the sheet, watching the coming gust, then, in the great silence and anxiety of all on board, the tranquil voice of Palombo would begin: —

"*Non, monseigneur,*
C'est trop d'honneur,
Lisette est sa-age,
Reste au villa-age."

And the squall might blow, shaking and submerging the vessel and making the rigging moan, the sailor's song continued, floating like a gull on the breast of the waves. Sometimes the wind played too strong an accompaniment and the

words were drowned; but between each dash of the seas as the water ran out of the scuppers, the chorus was heard again: —

"*Lisette est sa-age,*
Reste au villa-age."

One day, however, it rained and blew so hard I did not hear it. This was so extraordinary that I put my head out of the cabin. "Hey! Palombo, why don't you sing?" Palombo did not answer. He was motionless, lying on his bench. I went out to him. His teeth were chattering; his whole body trembled with fever. "He has got the *pountoura*," said his comrades, sadly. What they called *pountoura* is a stitch in the side, a pleurisy. The great leaden sky, the streaming vessel, the poor feverish soul wrapped in an old india-rubber coat which glistened in the rain like a seal's back — I never saw anything more lugubrious. Soon the cold, the wind, the dashing of the waves aggravated his trouble. Delirium seized him; it was necessary to put him ashore.

After much time and many efforts we entered, towards evening, a little harbour, silent and barren, where nothing stirred but the circular sweep of a few gulls. Around the shore rose high, scarped rocks and impermeable thickets of shrubs of a dull green, perennial and without season. Low down, near the water, was a little white house with gray shutters, the custom-house post. In the midst of this desert, the government building, numbered like a uniform cap, had something sinister about it.

There poor Palombo was put ashore. Melancholy haven for a sick man. We found the custom-house official in charge of the place supping with his wife and children in the chimney-corner. All these people had haggard, yellow faces, and large eyes circled with fever. The mother, still young, with a baby in her arms, shivered as she spoke to us. "It is a terrible post," the inspector said to me in a low voice. "We are obliged to renew our men here every two years. The fever of that marsh eats them up."

It was necessary to get a doctor. There was none nearer than Sartena, and that was six or eight leagues distant. What was to be done? Our sailors were tired out and could do no more, and it was too far to send a child. Then the wife, looking out of the door, called "Cecco! Cecco!" and a tall, well set-up young fellow entered, true type of a smuggler or a bandit, with his brown woollen cap and his goatskin mantle. As we landed I had noticed him sitting before the door, his red pipe in his mouth and his gun between his legs; but he disappeared, I knew not why, at our approach. Perhaps he thought gendarmes were with us. As he entered, the wife coloured a little. "This is my cousin," she said. "No danger that he will get lost in the thicket." Then she spoke to him in a low voice and showed him the patient. The man nodded without replying, went out, whistled to his dog, and started, his gun on his shoulder, springing from rock to rock with his long legs.

During this time the children, whom the presence of the inspector seemed to terrify, finished their dinner of chestnuts and *bruccio* (white cheese). Water, nothing but water on the table! And yet what good a drop of wine would have done them, poor little things. Ah, poverty! . . At last the mother took them up to bed; the father lighted his lantern and went to inspect the coast, and we sat still by the fire to watch our sick man, who tossed on his pallet as if at sea shaken by the waves. To quiet his *pountoura* a little we warmed pebbles and bricks and laid them at his side. Once or twice when I approached his bed the poor fellow knew me, and to thank me stretched out his hand with difficulty, a large hand, rough and burning as one of those bricks we took from the fire.

Sad watch! Outside, the bad weather had returned with the close of day. All was uproar, the rolling of waves, the dashing of spray, the battle of rocks and water. From time to time the tempest on the open sea succeeded in entering the bay and swirling around the house. We felt it in the sudden rise of the flame which lighted the mournful faces of the sailors grouped around the chimney and looking at the fire with that placidity of expression given by the habitual presence of great expanse and far horizons. Sometimes Palombo gently moaned; and then all eyes were turned to the dark corner where the poor comrade was dying far from his family and without succour; the chests heaved and I heard great sighs. That was all that the sense of their unfortunate lot drew from these

gentle and patient toilers of the sea. A sigh, and nothing more! Stay, I am wrong. Passing before me to throw a clod on the fire, one of them said in a low and heart-breaking voice: "You see monsieur, we have sometimes great troubles in our business."

THE CURE OF CUCUGNAN.

EVERY year at Candlemas the Provençal poets publish at Avignon a jovial little book full to the brim of merry tales and pretty verses. That of this year has just reached me, and in it I find an adorable *fabliau* which I shall try to translate for you, slightly abridging it. Parisians! hold out your sacks. It is the finest brand of Provençal flour that I serve you this day.

The Abbé Martin was curé of Cucugnan.

Good as bread, honest as gold, he loved his Cucugnanese paternally. To him, Cucugnan would have been heaven upon earth if the Cucugnanese had given him a little more satisfaction. But alas! the spiders spun their webs in his confessional, and on the glorious Easter-day the Host remained in the holy pyx. This harrowed the heart of the worthy priest, and he was always asking God to grant that he might not die until he had brought back to the fold his scattered flock.

Now you shall see how God listened to him.

One Sunday, after the Gospel, M. Martin went up into the pulpit.

"Brethren," he said, "you may believe me if you like: the other night I found myself, I, a miserable sinner, at the gates of Paradise.

"I rapped; Saint Peter came.

"'Bless me! is it you, my worthy Monsieur Martin?' he said to me. 'What good wind has brought you? what can I do for you?'

"'Great Saint Peter, you who hold the big book and the keys, would you tell me, if I am not too curious, how many Cucugnanese you have in Paradise?'

"'I can't refuse you anything, Monsieur Martin; sit down; we will look the thing out together.'

"And Saint Peter got out his big book, opened it, and put on his spectacles.

"'Let me see: Cucugnan, did you say? Cu . . . Cu . . . Cucugnan. Here we are, Cucugnan. . . My dear Monsieur Martin, it is a blank page. Not a soul. . . No more Cucugnanese in Paradise than fishbones in a turkey.'

"'What! No one from Cucugnan here? No one? It is n't possible! Do look again.'

"'No one, holy man. Look yourself if you think I am joking.'

"'I, *pécaïre!*' I stamped my feet and I cried for mercy with clasped hands. Whereupon Saint Peter said: —

"'Monsieur Martin, you must not turn your heart inside out in this way, or you'll have a fit of some kind. It is n't your fault, after all. Those Cucugnanese of yours, don't you see, they 'll have to do their quarantine in purgatory.'

"'Oh! for pity's sake, great Saint Peter, let me just go to purgatory for a minute to see them and comfort them.'

"'Willingly, my friend. . . Here, put on these sandals, for the roads are none too good. That's right. Now go straight before you. Don't you see a turning a long way down? There you'll find a silver door all studded with black crosses — on your right. Knock, and they'll open to you. Adieu! Keep well and lively.'

"Down I went — down, down! What a struggle! My flesh creeps for only thinking of it. A narrow path, full of briers and big shiny beetles and snakes hissing, brought me to the silver door.

"Pan! pan!

"'Who knocks?' said a hoarse and dismal voice.

"'The curé of Cucugnan.'

"'Of —?'

"'Of Cucugnan.'

"'Ah! . . Come in.'

"I went in. A tall, handsome angel with wings black as night and a garment resplendent as day, and a diamond key hanging to his belt, was writing, cra-cra, in a big book — bigger than that of Saint Peter.

"'Now then, what do you want?' asked the angel.

"'Noble angel of God, I want to know — perhaps you'll think me very inquisitive — whether my Cucugnanese are here.'

"'Your —?'

"'Cucugnanese, the inhabitants of Cucugnan. I am their prior.'

"'Ah, yes! the Abbé Martin, isn't it?'

"'At your service, Monsieur Angel.'

"'You say Cucugnan—'

"And the angel opened his big book, wetting his finger with his spittle to turn the leaves easily.

"'Cucugnan,' he said, with a heavy sigh. 'Monsieur Martin, we have n't a soul in purgatory from Cucugnan.'

"'Jesu! Marie! Joseph! not a soul from Cucugnan in purgatory! Then, great God! where are they?'

"'Eh! holy man! they are in paradise. Where the deuce do you suppose they are?'

"'But I have just come from there, from paradise.'

"'You have come from there! Well?'

"'They are not there! . . Ah! merciful mother of angels! . .'

"'But, holy man, if they are not in paradise and not in purgatory, there is no middle place, they are in—'

"'Holy Cross! Jesus, son of David! Aië! aië! aië! it is n't possible? Can it be that the great Saint Peter lied to me? I did n't hear a cock crow. . . Aië! poor people! and poor me! for how can I go to paradise if my Cucugnanese are not there?'

"'Listen to me, my poor Monsieur Martin. As you want to be so sure about this thing, cost what it may, and to see with your own eyes what there is to it, take this path and run fast, if you

know how to run. You will come to a great big portal on your left. There you can find out everything. God grants it.'

"And the angel shut his gate.

"'T was a long path, paved all the way with red embers. I tottered as if I were drunk; at every step I stumbled; I was bathed in perspiration; every hair of my body had its drop of sweat; I panted with thirst. But thanks to the sandals that good Saint Peter lent me, I did not burn my feet.

"After I had made many a limping misstep I saw at my left hand a gate — no, a portal, an enormous portal, gaping wide open, like the door of a big oven. O! my children, what a sight! *There*, no one asked my name; *there*, no register. In batches, in crowds, people entered, just as you, my brethren, go to the wineshops on Sunday.

"I sweated great drops, and yet I was chilled to the bone and shuddering. My hair stood erect. I smelt burning, roasting flesh, something like the smell that fills all Cucugnan when Eloy the blacksmith burns the hoof of an old donkey as he shoes her. I lost my breath in that stinking, fiery air; I heard an awful clamour, moans, howls, oaths.

"'Well! are you, or are you *not* coming in, you?' said a hornèd demon, pricking me with his pitchfork.

"'I? I don't go in there. I am a friend of God.'

"'A friend of God! Hey! you scabby rascal! what are you doing here?'

"'I have come — ah! I can't talk of it, my legs

are giving way under me. I have come — I have come a long way — to humbly ask you — if — if by chance — you have here — some one — some one from Cucugnan — '

" ' Ha! fire of God! you are playing stupid, are you? Just as if you did n't know that all Cucugnan is here. There, you ugly crow, look there, and see how we treat 'em here, your precious Cucugnanese — '

" I looked, and saw, in the midst of awful, whirling flames, —

" That long Coq-Galine, — you all knew him, my brethren, — Coq-Galine, who got drunk so often and shook his fleas on his poor Clairette.

" I saw Catarinet — that little slut with her nose in the air — who slept alone in the barn — you remember, you rascals? But that 's enough — enough said.

" I saw Pascal Doigt-de-Pois who made his oil of M. Julien's olives.

" I saw Babette the gleaner, who, when she gleaned, grabbed handfuls from the sheaves to fill her bundle.

" I saw Maître Grabasi, who oiled the wheel of his barrow so slick;

" And Dauphine, who sold the water of his well so dear;

" And Tortillard, who, when he met me carrying the Good God, kept on his way as if he had only met a dog, — pipe in his mouth, cap on his head, proud as Artaban.

"And I saw Coulau with his Zette, and Jacques, and Pierre, and Toni. . . "

Livid with fear, the audience groaned, beholding, through the opened gates of hell, this one his father, that one her mother, some their grandmothers, some their brothers and sisters.

"You feel now, my brethren," said the good abbé, "that this must not go on any longer. I have the charge of souls, and I wish to save you, I *will* save you, from the abyss to which you are all rolling head-foremost. To-morrow I shall set to work—no later than to-morrow. And I shall have my hands full. This is what I shall do. In order to do it well, it must be done methodically. We will go row by row, as at Jonquières when you dance.

"To-morrow, Monday, I shall confess the old men and the old women. That 's nothing.

"Tuesday, the children. Soon done.

"Wednesday, the lads and lasses. May take long.

"Thursday, the men. Cut them short.

"Friday, the women. I shall say: No rigmaroles.

"Saturday, the miller! One whole day is not too much for him alone.

"And Sunday it will all be done, and we shall be happy.

"You know, my children, that when the wheat is ripe it must be cut; when the wine is drawn it must be drunk. Here 's a lot of dirty linen to wash, and it must be washed, and well washed.

"That is the good I wish you. Amen."

What was said was done. The wash came off. And since that memorable Sunday the fragrance of the virtues of Cucugnan can be smelt in an area of ten leagues round.

And the good pastor, M. Martin, happy and gay, dreamed the other night that, followed by his whole flock, he mounted, in resplendent procession, amid gleaming torches, and clouds of incense wafted by the choir-boys chanting the Te Deum, the great lighted road to the City of our God.

Now there 's the tale of the curé of Cucugnan, such as that great rascal Roumanille ordered me to tell it to you; he himself having got it from some other good fellow.

AGED FOLK.

"A LETTER, Père Azan?"

"Yes, monsieur; and it comes from Paris."

He was quite proud, that worthy old Azan, that it came from Paris. I was not. Something told me that that Parisian missive from the rue Jean-Jacques, dropping thus upon my table unexpectedly, and so early in the morning, would make me lose my whole day. I was not mistaken, — and you shall see why.

"You must do me a service, my friend," said the letter. "Close your mill for a day, and go to Eyguières. Eyguières is a large village, three or four leagues from your mill, — a pleasant walk. When you get there, ask for the Orphans' Convent. The first house beyond the convent is a low building with gray shutters, and a small garden behind it. Enter without knocking, — the door is always open, — and as you enter, call out very loud: 'Good-day, worthy people! I am a friend of Maurice.' On which you will see two little old persons — oh! but old, old, ever so old — stretching out their hands to you from their big arm-chairs; and you are to kiss them for me, with all your heart, as if they were yours, your own friends. Then you will talk. They will talk to you of me.

and nothing else; they will say a lot of foolish things, which you are to listen to without laughing. You won't laugh, will you? They are my grandparents; two beings whose very life I am, and who have not seen me these ten years. . . Ten years, a long time! But how can I help it? Paris clutches me. And they, they are so old that if they came to see me they would break to bits on the way. . . Happily, you are there, my dear miller, and, in kissing you, these poor old people will fancy they are kissing me. I have so often told them about you, and of the good friendship that—"

The devil take good friendship! Just this very morning, when the weather is so beautiful! but not at all fit to tramp along the roads; too much mistral, too much sun, a regular Provence day. When that cursèd letter came, I had just picked out my shelter between two rocks, where I dreamed of staying all day like a lizard, drinking light and listening to the song of the pines. Well, I could not help myself. I shut up the mill, grumbling, and hid the key. My stick, my pipe, and off I went.

I reached Eyguières in about two hours. The village was deserted; everybody was in the fields. From the elms in the courtyards, white with dust, the grasshoppers were screaming. To be sure, in the square before the mayor's office, a donkey was sunning himself, and a flock of pigeons were dabbling in the fountain before the church, but no one able to show me the Orphans' Convent. Happily,

an old witch suddenly appeared, crouching and knitting in the angle of her doorway. I told her what I was looking for; and as she was a witch of very great power, she had only to raise her distaff, and, behold! the Orphans' Convent rose up before me. It was a large, sullen, black house, proud of exhibiting above its arched portal an old cross of red freestone with Latin around it. Beside this house, I saw another, very small; gray shutters, garden behind it. I knew it directly, and I entered without knocking.

All my life I shall remember that long, cool, quiet corridor, the walls rose-tinted, the little garden quivering at the other end, and seen through a thin blind. It seemed to me that I was entering the house of some old bailiff of the olden time of Sedaine. At the end of the passage, on the left, through a half-opened door, I heard the tick-tack of a large clock and the voice of a child — a child in school — who was reading aloud, and pausing at each syllable: "Then—Saint—I–re–ne–us — cri–ed — out—I—am — the — wheat— of — the Lord—I—must— be —ground — by — the — teeth —of—these—an–i–mals." I softly approached the door and looked in.

In the quiet half-light of a little room, an old, old man with rosy cheeks, wrinkled to the tips of his fingers, sat sleeping in a chair, his mouth open, his hands on his knees. At his feet, a little girl dressed in blue — with a great cape and a linen cap, the orphans' costume — was reading the life of Saint Irenæus in a book that was bigger than

herself. The reading had operated miraculously on the entire household. The old man slept in his chair, the flies on the ceiling, the canaries in their cage at the window, and the great clock snored: tick-tack, tick-tack. Nothing was awake in the room but a broad band of light, which came, straight and white, between the closed shutters, full of lively sparkles and microscopic whirlings.

Amid this general somnolence, the child went gravely on with her reading: —

"Im-me-di-ate-ly—two—li-ons—dart-ed—up-on—him—and—ate—him—up." At this moment I entered the room. The lions of Saint Irenæus darting into the room could not have produced greater stupefaction. A regular stage effect! The little one gave a cry, the big book fell, the flies and the canaries woke, the clock struck, the old man started up, quite frightened, and I myself, being rather troubled, stopped short on the sill of the door, and called out very loud: "Good-day, worthy people! I am Maurice's friend."

Oh, then! if you had only seen him, that old man, if you had only seen how he came to me with outstretched arms, embracing me, pressing my hands, and wandering about the room, crying out: —

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

All the wrinkles of his face were laughing. He was red. He stuttered: —

"Ah! monsieur — ah! monsieur."

Then he went to the back of the room and called: —

"Mamette!"

A door opened, a trot of mice in the corridor — it was Mamette. Nothing prettier than that little old woman with her mob-cap, her brown gown, and the embroidered handkerchief which she held in her hand in the olden fashion. Most affecting thing! the two were like each other. With a false front and yellow bows to his cap, he too might be called Mamette. Only, the real Mamette must have wept a great deal in her life, for she was even more wrinkled than he. Like him, she too had an orphan with her, a little nurse in a blue cape who never left her; and to see these old people protected by those orphans was indeed the most touching thing you can imagine.

On entering, Mamette began to make me a deep curtsey, but a word of the old man stopped her in the middle of it: —

"A friend of Maurice."

Instantly she trembled, she wept, dropped her handkerchief, grew red, very red, redder than he. Those aged folk! who have hardly a drop of blood in their veins, how it flies to their face at the least emotion!

"Quick, quick, a chair," said the old lady to her little girl.

"Open the shutters," said the old man to his.

Then taking me each by a hand they led me, trotting along, to the window the better to see me. The armchairs were placed; I sat between the two on a stool, the little Blues behind us, and the questioning began: —

"How is he? What is he doing? Why does n't he come? Is he happy?"

Patati, patata! and so on for two hours.

I answered as best I could all their questions, giving such details about my friend as I knew, and boldly inventing others that I did not know; being careful to avoid admitting that I had never noticed whether his windows closed tightly and what coloured paper he had on his walls.

"The paper of his bedroom? blue, madame, light blue, with garlands of flowers —"

"Really!" said the old lady, much affected; then she added, turning to her husband: "He is such a dear lad!"

"Yes, yes! a dear lad!" said the other, with enthusiasm.

And all the time that I was speaking they kept up between them little nods, and sly laughs and winks, and knowing looks; or else the old man came closer to say in my ear: —

"Speak louder, she is a little hard of hearing."

And she on her side: —

"A little louder, if you please. He does n't hear very well."

Then I raised my voice, and both of them thanked me with a smile; and in those faded smiles, — bending toward me, seeking in the depths of my eyes the image of their Maurice, — I was, myself, quite moved to see that image, vague, veiled, almost imperceptible, as if I beheld my friend smiling to me from afar through a mist.

Suddenly the old man sat upright in his chair.

"I have just thought, Mamette, — perhaps he has not breakfasted!"

And Mamette, distressed, throws up her arms.

"Not breakfasted! oh, heavens!"

I thought they were still talking of Maurice, and I was about to say that that worthy lad never waited later than noon for his breakfast. But no, it was of me they were thinking; and it was indeed a sight to see their commotion when I had to own that I was still fasting.

"Quick! set the table, little Blues! That table in the middle of the room — the Sunday cloth — the flowered plates. And no laughing, if you please! Make haste, make haste!"

And haste they made. Only time to break three plates and breakfast was served.

"A good little breakfast," said Mamette, leading me to the table; "only, you must eat it alone. We have eaten already."

Poor old people! at whatever hour you took them, they had "eaten already."

Mamette's good little breakfast was a cup of milk, dates, and a *barquette*, a kind of shortcake, no doubt enough to feed her canaries for a week; and to think that I, alone, I ate up all their provisions! I felt the indignation around the table; the little Blues whispered and nudged each other; and those canaries in their cage, — I knew they were saying: "Oh! that monsieur, he is eating up the whole of the *barquette!*"

I did eat it all, truly, almost without perceiving

that I did so, preoccupied as I was by looking round that light and placid room, where floated, as it were, the fragrance of things ancient. Especially noticeable were two little beds from which I could not detach my eyes. Those beds, almost two cradles, I pictured them in the morning at dawn, still inclosed within their great fringed curtains. Three o'clock strikes. That is the hour when old people wake.

"Are you asleep, Mamette?"

"No, my friend."

"Is n't Maurice a fine lad?"

"Yes, yes, a fine lad."

And from that I imagined a long conversation by merely looking at the little beds of the two old people, standing side by side.

During this time a terrible drama was going on at the other end of the room before a closet. It concerned reaching up to the top shelf for a certain bottle of brandied cherries which had awaited Maurice's return for the last ten years. The old people now proposed to open it for me. In spite of Mamette's supplications the husband was determined to get the cherries himself, and, mounted on a chair to the terror of his wife, he was striving to reach them. You can see the scene from here: the old man trembling on the points of his toes, the little Blues clinging to his chair, Mamette behind him, breathless, her arms extended, and, pervading all, a slight perfume of bergamot exhaled from the open closet and the great piles of unbleached linen therein contained. It was charming.

At last, after many efforts, they succeeded in getting it from the closet, that famous bottle, and with it an old silver cup, Maurice's cup when he was little. This they filled with cherries to the brim — Maurice was so fond of cherries! And while the old man served me, he whispered in my ear, as if his mouth watered: —

"You are very lucky, you, to be the one to eat them. My wife put them up. You 'll taste something good."

Alas! his wife had put them up, but she had forgotten to sweeten them. They were atrocious, your cherries, my poor Mamette — But that did not prevent me from eating them all without blinking.

The meal over, I rose to take leave of my hosts. They would fain have kept me longer to talk of that dear lad, but the day was shortening, the mill was far, and I had to go.

The old man rose when I did.

"Mamette, my coat; I will accompany him as far as the square."

I felt very sure that in her heart Mamette thought it too cool for the old man to be out, but she did not show it. Only, as she helped him to put his arms into the sleeves of his coat, a handsome snuff-coloured coat with mother-of-pearl buttons, I heard the dear creature say to him softly: —

"You won't be late, will you?"

And he, with a roguish air: —

"Hey! hey! I don't know — perhaps not."

Thereupon they looked at each other, laughing, and the little Blues laughed to see them laugh, and the canaries laughed too, in their cage, after their fashion. Between ourselves I think the smell of those cherries had made them all a little tipsy.

Daylight was fading as we left the house, grandpapa and I. A little Blue followed at a distance to bring him back; but he did not see her, and seemed quite proud to walk along, arm in arm with me, like a man. Mamette, beaming, watched us from the sill of her door with pretty little nods of her head that seemed to say: "See there! my poor man, he can still walk about."

PROSE BALLADS.

WHEN I opened my door this morning I saw around my mill a carpet of hoar-frost. The turf cracked and glittered like glass; the hillside shivered. For a single day my dear Provence disguised herself as a Northern land; and it was among pines draped with frost and tufts of lavender looking like crystal bouquets that I wrote two ballads of rather Germanic fantasy, while the ice-dew sparkled before me, and away up there in the clear blue sky triangular flocks of storks, coming from the country of Henri Heine, flew towards the Camargue, crying hoarsely: "It is cold — cold — cold."

I.

THE DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN.

THE little Dauphin is ill; the little Dauphin will die. In all the churches of the kingdom the Holy Sacrament is exposed day and night, and great tapers burn for the recovery of the royal child. The streets of the old Residenz are sad and silent; the bells no longer ring; carriages are driven at a foot-pace. Around the palace anxious burghers watch, through the iron railings, the Swiss porters

with gilded paunches talking in the courtyard with airs of importance.

The whole castle is a-quiver. Chamberlains, majordomos are running up and down the marble staircases. The galleries are filled with pages and courtiers in silken garments going from one group to another, asking for news in whispers. On the wide porticos ladies of honour in despair are dropping deep curtseys to one another and wiping their eyes with embroidered handkerchiefs.

In the Orangery is a numerous assemblage of physicians in their robes. They are seen through the sashes to shake their long black sleeves and lean their clubbed wigs doctorally to one another. The preceptor and the equerry of the little Dauphin are pacing up and down before the door awaiting the decision of the Faculty. Scullions pass them without bowing. The equerry swears like a pagan; the preceptor recites Horace. And all this while, from the stables over there, comes a plaintive neigh. 'T is the chestnut pony of the little Dauphin, forgotten by the grooms, which is whinnying sadly before its empty manger.

And the king? Where is Monseigneur the king? The king is shut up all alone in a room at the farther end of the castle. Majesties do not like to be seen to weep. As for the queen, that is another thing. Seated by the pillow of the little Dauphin, her beautiful face is bathed in tears, and she sobs aloud as any shopkeeper's wife might do.

Among the laces of his couch the little Dauphin,

whiter than the pillows on which he lies, is resting, his eyes closed. They think he sleeps. But no, the little Dauphin is not asleep. He turns to his mother, and seeing her tears, he says to her: —

"*Madame la reine*, why do you weep? Do you really think I am going to die?"

The queen tries to answer. Sobs prevent her from speaking.

"Do not weep, *Madame la reine;* you forget that I am the Dauphin, and that Dauphins cannot die in this way."

The queen sobs more than ever, and the little Dauphin begins to be frightened.

"Holà!" he said, "I will not let Death take me; I will find a way to keep him out. Send, at once, for forty of my soldiers, the strongest men; let them mount guard around my bed. Let a hundred cannon be ready, day and night, with lighted matches, beneath my windows, and sorrow to Death if then he dare approach me!"

To please the royal child the queen made signs. Cannon were heard to roll into the courtyard, and the forty tallest soldiers, halberds in hand, stood ranged around the room. They were all old veterans, with gray moustaches. The Dauphin clapped his hands on seeing them. One he recognized, and called to him: —

"Lorrain! Lorrain!"

The soldier advanced toward the bed.

"I love you, my old Lorrain. Show me your big sabre. If Death comes here to take me, you must kill him — won't you?"

Lorrain replied: —

"Yes, monseigneur."

But two big tears rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks.

At this moment the chaplain approached the little Dauphin, and spoke to him in a low voice, showing him a crucifix. The little Dauphin listened with a surprised air; then, suddenly interrupting the priest, he said: —

"I understand very well what you are saying, *Monsieur l'abbé;* but, after all, could not my little friend Beppo die in my place if I gave him plenty of money?"

The chaplain continued to speak in a low voice, and the little Dauphin seemed more and more astonished.

When the chaplain had finished, the little Dauphin said, with a heavy sigh: —

"All that you tell me is very sad, *Monsieur l'abbé*, but one thing comforts me; it is that up there, in the paradise of stars, I shall still be the Dauphin. I know that the Good God is my cousin, and he will not fail to treat me according to my rank."

Then he added, turning to his mother: —

"Tell them to bring me my finest clothes, my ermine mantle, and my velvet shoes. I wish to make myself gorgeous for the angels and to enter paradise as the Dauphin should."

Again, for the third time, the chaplain leaned down to the little Dauphin and spoke to him in a low voice. Suddenly, in the middle of his discourse the royal child interrupted him angrily: —

"Then to be Dauphin," he cried, "is just nothing at all!"

And — not willing to hear another word — the little Dauphin turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly.

II.

THE SUB-PREFECT IN THE FIELDS.

THE sub-prefect is on his rounds. Coachman before, footman behind, the calèche of the sub-prefecture bears him majestically to the district assembly of Combe-aux-Fées. For this memorable journey the sub-prefect has put on his fine embroidered coat, his little opera-hat, his tight breeches that are silver-striped, and his gala sword with a mother-of-pearl handle. On his knees reposes a great portfolio of crinkled leather, at which he gazes sadly.

The sub-prefect gazes sadly at his leather case; he thinks of the famous speech he is about to deliver before the inhabitants of Combe-aux-Fées: —

"Messieurs, and dear constituents —"

But in vain does he twist the silk of his blond moustache and repeat a score of times: —

"Messieurs, and dear constituents —"

Not another word will come. It is so hot in that calèche. The high-road to Combe-aux-Fées stretches dustily as far as eye can reach beneath that Southern sun. The air is like a furnace; on the elms, white with dust, that line the road, thou-

sands of grasshoppers are discoursing shrilly from one tree to another. Suddenly the sub-prefect quivers. Over there, at the foot of a slope, he perceives a little wood of live-oaks which seems to be making him a sign.

The little wood of live-oaks seems to be making him a sign: —

"Come this way, monsieur, come this way to compose your speech; you will be much more comfortable under my trees."

The sub-prefect is persuaded. He jumps from his calèche and tells his servants to wait for him; he is going to compose his speech in the little wood of live-oaks.

In the little wood of live-oaks there are birds and violets, and brooks purling through the turf. When the birds caught sight of the prefect in his handsome breeches carrying his leather case they were frightened and stopped singing, the brooks dared not purl, and the violets hid in the grass. All that little world had never seen a sub-prefect, and they asked one another in whispers who the grand gentleman could be who walked about in silver-laced breeches.

Whispering beneath the leafage, they asked one another who that grand gentleman in the silver-laced breeches could be. During this time the sub-prefect, delighted with the silence and the coolness of the wood, lifted the tails of his coat, laid his opera-hat on the grass, and sat himself down in the moss at the foot of a fine young live-oak. Then he opened his leather portfolio and

took therefrom a very large sheet of ministerial paper.

"He is an artist," said a redwing.

"No," said a bullfinch, "he is not an artist because he wears silvered breeches; he is a prince."

"Neither prince nor artist," interrupted an old nightingale who had sung in the gardens of the sub-prefecture for one whole season. "I know who he is — he is a sub-prefect."

And all the little wood began to whisper and murmur: —

"He 's a sub-prefect! he 's a sub-prefect!"

"How bald he is!" observed a lark with a big tuft.

The violets asked: —

"Is he cross?"

"Is he cross?" asked the violets.

The nightingale answered: —

"Not at all."

On this assurance the birds began to sing, the brooks to purl, the violets to exhale their fragrance just as if the monsieur were not there.

Impassible in the midst of the pretty racket, the sub-prefect sat invoking in his heart the Muse of agricultural comitias, and he presently began, with pencil uplifted, to declaim his speech in his voice of ceremony.

"Messieurs, and dear constituents — "

"Messieurs, and dear constituents," said the sub-prefect, in his voice of ceremony.

A burst of laughter interrupted him; he turned round and saw nothing but a green woodpecker,

perched on his opera-hat, which looked at him smiling. The sub-prefect shrugged his shoulders, and attempted to resume his speech; but the woodpecker stopped him again, crying out: —

"What's the good?"

"What is the good?" said the sub-prefect, becoming very red. Then waving away with a gesture that insolent beast, he began once more: —

"Messieurs, and dear constituents —"

"Messieurs, and dear constituents," resumed the sub-prefect.

But just then, all the little violets raised their heads to the tops of their stalks and said to him softly: —

"Monsieur, do smell how good we smell."

And the brooks purled a music divine in the mosses; and above, in the branches over his head, the red-throated warblers were singing their prettiest tunes, as if the whole little wood had conspired to prevent him from composing his speech.

Yes, the whole little wood had conspired to prevent him from composing his speech. The sub-prefect, tipsy with perfume and drunk with music, tried in vain to resist the new spell that seized him. He leaned his elbows on the grass, unbuttoned his fine lace coat, and stammered again two or three times: —

"Messieurs, and dear —"

Then he sent his dear constituents to the devil, and the Muse of agricultural comitias was forced to veil her face.

Veil thy face, O Muse of agricultural comitias! When at the end of an hour the servants of the sub-prefecture, uneasy about their master, entered the little wood, they saw a sight that caused them to recoil with horror. The sub-prefect was lying on his stomach in the grass, his clothes loose, his coat off, as disorderly as a bohemian, and — all the while chewing violets — he, the sub-prefect, was writing poetry!

BIXIOU'S PORTFOLIO.

ONE morning in the month of October, a few days before leaving Paris, a man entered my room while I was at breakfast, an old man in a shabby, muddy coat, his spine bent, and trembling on his long legs like an unfledged heron. This was Bixiou. Yes, Parisians, your Bixiou, the malicious, fascinating Bixiou, — that frantic jester, who delighted you for fifteen years with his pamphlets and his caricatures. Ah! the poor fellow, what distress! Were it not for a grimace he made as he entered the room I should never have recognized him.

With his head bent sideways to his shoulder, a cane at his teeth like a flute, the illustrious and lugubrious jester advanced to the middle of the room, striking against my table, and saying in a doleful voice: —

"Have pity on a poor blind man!"

The mimicry was so good that I could not help laughing. But he, very coldly: —

"You think I am joking — look!"

And he turned to me a pair of white eyes, sightless.

"I am blind, my dear fellow, blind for life. That is what comes of writing with vitriol. I have burned out my eyes at that pretty trade,

yes, burned them to the socket — to the *bobèches!*" he added, showing me his calcined eyelids, in which not the vestige of a lash remained.

I was so moved that I could not speak to him. My silence made him uneasy.

"Are you at work?"

"No, Bixiou, I am at breakfast. Will you have some?"

He did not answer, but by the quivering of his nostrils I saw his desire to accept. I took him by the hand and seated him beside me.

While they served him, the poor devil breathed in, as it were, the food with a laugh.

"It smells good, all that. I shall feast well; it is so long since I gave up breakfasting. A two-sous loaf every morning while I haunt the ministries,— for you know I haunt the ministries now-a-days; that's my only profession. I am trying to hook a tobacco license. You are shocked, but what am I to do? They must have food at home. I can't design any longer; I can't write. Dictate? But what? I have nothing in my head now; I can't invent. My business was to see the grimaces of Paris and show them up, and I can't do that any longer. So I bethought me of a tobacco license — not on the boulevards, you understand. I have no claim to that favour, not being the mother of a danseuse, nor the widow of an officer. No, simply some little provincial tobacco office, far away, in a corner of the Vosges. There I shall set up a big porcelain pipe and call myself Hans

or Zébédé, as in Erckmann-Chatrian, and I shall console myself for not writing any longer by making cornucopias for snuff out of the works of my contemporaries.

"That is all I ask for. Not much, is it? Well, it is the devil and all to get it. And yet I ought not to be without influence. Think how I used to be in the thick of everything! I dined with the marshal, and the prince, and the ministers; all those people wanted me because I amused them, or else because they were afraid of me. Now, I can't make any one afraid. Oh, my eyes! my poor eyes! No one invites me now. It is too dismal to have a blind head at table. Pass me the bread, if you please. Ah! those bandits; they are making me pay dear for that wretched tobacco license. For six months I have lobbied the ministries with my petition. I get there every morning when the servants are lighting the fires and exercising their Excellencies' horses in the courtyards, and I don't leave till night, when the lamps are brought in and the kitchens begin to smell good. My whole life is spent on the wooden chests of antechambers. The ushers know me well, I can tell you! At the Interior they call me 'That kind monsieur!' because, to get their good word, I make puns or sketch them some of the big-wigs on a corner of their tablets, which makes them laugh. That's what I've come to after twenty years of rollicking successes! that's the end of an artist's life. And to think that there are forty thousand young rascals in France whose very mouths water to take up that

profession! To think that every day in the provinces a locomotive gets up steam to bring batches of imbeciles hungry for literature and printed rubbish to Paris! Ah! deluded provinces, if Bixiou's miserable fate could only teach you a lesson!"

So saying, he dropped his nose into his plate and began to eat with avidity, without another word. It was piteous to see him. Every second he lost his bread, his fork, and felt about for his glass. Poor man! he had not yet got the habit of blindness.

After a while, he resumed: —

"Do you know what is most horrible of all to me? It is that I can no longer read the papers. You have to belong to the newspaper business to understand that. Sometimes, in the evening when I go home I buy one, only to smell that odour of damp paper and fresh news. It is so good! but there 's no one to read it to me. My wife might, but she won't; she pretends that in the 'diverse facts' there is so much that is improper. Ha! those former mistresses! once married, there are none more prudish than they. Ever since I made her Madame Bixiou she thinks herself bound to be a bigot — and to such a point! Did n't she want to have me wash my eyes with water from the Salette? and then, holy bread, and holy water, and collections, and Foundlings and Chinese orphans and I don't know what all. We are in good works up to our chin. *I* think it would be a good work to read me my newspaper, but no, she won't. If

my daughter were at home she would read it to me, but after I became blind I sent her to Notre-Dame-des-Arts, to have one less mouth to feed. She's another who gives me comfort! not nine years in the world, and she has had every known disease! And sad! and ugly! uglier than I, if that's possible — a fright! Well, I never could make anything but caricatures, and she is one of them — Ah ça! I'm a fine fellow to be telling you my family histories. What are they to you? Come, give me a little more of that brandy. I must brace myself up; I am going from here to the ministry of Public Instruction, and the ushers there are not so easy as some to amuse — they are all retired professors."

I poured him out his brandy. He began to drink it with little sips and a gentler air. Presently I don't know what fancy took him, but he rose, glass in hand, turned on all sides that head of a blind adder, with the cajoling smile of a man about to speak, and said, in a strident voice, as if haranguing a banquet of two hundred guests: —

"To Art! To Letters! To the Press!"

And thereupon he launched into a ten minutes' speech, the craziest, most marvellous improvisation which ever issued from that satirical brain.

Imagine a review of events at the end of a year, entitled, "The Bohemia of Letters in 18–"— our so called literary meetings, our disquisitions, our quarrels, all the absurdities of an eccentric society, a sewer of ink, hell without grandeur, where the denizens throttle, and gut, and rob one

another, and talk interest and sous (far more than they do among the bourgeois), which does not hinder many from dying of hunger—in short, an epitome of all our meanness, all our paltriness; old Baron T. . . of the Tombola going about saying "gna, gna, gna" in the Tuileries gardens with his wooden bowl and his bottle-blue coat; together with the deaths of the year, the burials *pro tem.*, the funeral orations, always the same "dear and regretted" over a poor devil whose grave no one will pay for; and the suicides, and those who have gone mad—imagine all that related, detailed, gesticulated, by a humourist of genius, and you will have an idea of Bixiou's improvisation.

His speech ended and the brandy drunk, he asked me what time it was and went away without bidding me good-bye. I don't know what the ushers of M. Duruy thought of his visit that morning, but I know that never in all my life did I feel more sad or so ill at ease for the work of the day as I did that morning after the departure of my terrible visitor. My inkstand sickened me, my pen was a horror to me. I wanted to rush away, afar, to see trees, to smell something good. What hatred, great God! what gall! what a need to slaver all things! to soil all things! Ah! the miserable man!

I paced up and down my room in a fury, fancying I still heard the sneer of disgust with which he had spoken of his daughter.

Suddenly, near the chair where the blind man

had been sitting, I felt something touch my foot. Stooping I saw his portfolio, a big, shiny wallet with broken edges, which never left him, and which he called in jest his "venom pocket." That pocket was as renowned among us as the famous boxes of M. de Girardin. It was said there were terrible things within it. The opportunity now offered itself to ascertain if this were so. In falling, the old portfolio, stuffed too full, had burst, and the papers lay scattered on the carpet. I was forced to pick them up, one by one; and so doing I saw: —

A number of letters, written on flowered paper, all beginning: "My dear papa," and signed *Céline Bixiou of the Children of Marie.*

Old prescriptions for children's ailments; croup, convulsions, scarlatina, measles; the poor little thing had not been spared a single one.

Finally, from a large sealed envelope, a few strands of yellow curly hair were escaping, and on the paper was written, in big, straggling writing, the writing of a blind man: —

"Céline's hair, cut off May 13th; the day she entered over there."

That is what there was in Bixiou's portfolio.

Ah, Parisians, you are all alike. Disgust, sarcasm, infernal laughter, ferocious jeers, and then— *Céline's hair, cut off May 13th.*

THE LEGEND OF THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN BRAIN.

TO THE LADY WHO ASKS FOR GAY STORIES.

On reading your letter, madame, I felt something like remorse. I blamed myself for the half-mourning colour of my tales, and I resolved to offer you to-day something joyous, even wildly joyous.

Why should I be sad, after all? I am living a thousand leagues from Parisian fogs, on a luminous hill, in a land of tambourines and muscat wine. Around me is nought but sun and music; I have orchestras of finches, choral societies of tom-tits; in the morning, curlews are saying: Coureli! coureli! at midday come the cicadas; and then the shepherds playing their fifes, and the pretty young brunettes laughing among the vines. In truth, this place is ill-chosen to rub-in black. I ought rather to send to a lady rose-coloured poems and tales of gallantry.

But, no! I am still too near Paris. Every day that city sends me, even among my pines, spatterings of her sadness. At the moment when I write these lines, the news reaches me of poor Charles Barbara's miserable death, and my mill is a place of mourning. Adieu, curlews and cicadas! I have

no heart now for gayety. This is why, madame, instead of the lively, jesting story that I meant to write for you, you must accept to-day one more melancholy legend.

There was once a man with a golden brain; yes, madame, a brain all golden. When he came into the world the doctors thought that the babe could not live, so heavy was his head and his cranium so developed. He did live, however, and he grew in the sun like a beautiful olive-tree. But his big head dragged him about, and it was pitiable to see how he knocked against the furniture as he went along. He often fell. Once he rolled from the top of a portico and struck his forehead on the marble steps, and his skull rang like an ingot of metal. They thought him dead; but, on picking him up, only a slight wound was found, out of which two or three tiny drops of gold oozed into his hair. This was how his parents first knew that his brain was gold.

The thing was kept secret. The poor little fellow himself did not know it. Now and then he would ask why they no longer let him run out to play with the children in the street.

"They would steal you, my dear treasure," replied his mother.

That gave the little one a great fear of being stolen. He played alone, and said no more; staggering heavily from one room to another.

When he was eighteen years of age his parents first revealed to him the abnormal gift he had

received from fate; and as they had brought him up and fed him until that day, they asked him, in return, for a little of his gold. The lad did not hesitate. Instantly — how, or by what means, the legend does not say — he tore from his brain a morsel of massive gold, a piece as big as a nut, and proudly flung it on his mother's lap. Then, quite dazzled by the thought of the riches he carried in his brain, mad with desires, drunk with his power, he quitted his father's house and went out into the world, squandering his treasure.

At the pace he led his life, in royal fashion, sowing gold without counting it, one would have thought that his brain was inexhaustible. It did exhaust itself, however, and by degrees his eyes grew dim, his cheeks hollow. At last, one morning after a wild debauch, the unfortunate fellow, left alone amid the fragments of the feast and the lamps that were paling, was horrified at the enormous breach he had made in his ingots. It was time to stop.

Henceforth, a new existence. The man with the golden brain went away, to live apart, by the work of his hands; suspicious and timid as a miser, fleeing from temptation, striving to forget, himself, the fatal riches which he desired never to touch again. Unfortunately, a friend followed him into his solitude; and that friend knew his secret.

One night the poor man was awakened by a pain in his head, a dreadful pain; he sprang up terri-

fied, and saw, in a moon ray, his friend hastily departing and hiding something beneath his cloak.

A piece of his brain which was stolen from him!

Some time later, the man with the golden brain fell in love. This time all was over with him. He loved with the best of his soul a fair-haired little woman, who loved him in return, but nevertheless preferred bow-knots and feathers and pretty bronze tassels to her boots.

Between the fingers of this dainty creature, half bird, half doll, the gold slipped gayly away. She had all the caprices; he never could say her nay; for fear of troubling her, he never told her to the last about the melancholy source of his fortune.

"We must be very rich," she would say.

And the poor fellow answered: —

"Oh, yes! very rich indeed!"

And so saying he smiled with love at the little fairy bird that was eating his brain out innocently. Sometimes, however, fears took possession of him; he longed to become a miser; but then the little woman would come to him, skipping, and say:

"My husband, you are so rich, buy me something that is very costly."

And he bought her something that was very costly.

This lasted two years; then, one morning, the little woman died, no one knew why, like a bird. The gold was almost at an end, and with what remained of it the widower gave his dear lost love a fine interment. Bells all ringing, mourning coaches

draped with black, horses caparisoned, silver tears upon the velvet, and great black plumes upon their heads. Nothing seemed to him too magnificent. What was his gold to him now? He gave it to the church, to the bearers, to those who sold the *immortelles;* he gave it to every one, without a question. So, on leaving the cemetery, almost nothing remained to him of that marvellous brain, except a few atoms in the corners of the cranium.

Then he was seen to go away through the streets, with a wild look, his hands held out before him, stumbling along like a drunken man. At night, when the arcades were brilliant, he stopped before a large show-window in which a mass of stuffs and adornments glittered under the gaslight, and fixing his eyes on two pairs of blue satin slippers lined with swan's-down, "I wonder which she would like best," he said to himself, smiling. Then, forgetting already that the little wife was dead, he entered to buy them.

At the farther end of the shop the owner heard a loud cry; rushing forward she recoiled with fear on seeing a tall man leaning on the counter and gazing at her stupefied. In one hand he was holding a pair of blue slippers lined with swan's-down; the other he held out to her, all cut and bleeding, with fragments of gold at the tips of the nails.

That, madame, is the legend of the man with the golden brain.

In spite of its fantastic air, this legend is true from beginning to end. There are in this world

poor fellows who are compelled to live by their brains, and to pay in the fine gold of their marrow and substance for the smallest things of life. It is their daily martyrdom; and when they are weary of suffering—

THE POET MISTRAL.

LAST Sunday, on rising, I fancied I had waked in the rue du Faubourg-Montmartre. It rained, the sky was gray, the mill melancholy. I was afraid to spend that cold, rainy day at home, and suddenly a desire came to me to go and warm myself up beside Frédéric Mistral, that great poet, who lives three leagues away from my pines in his little village of Maillane.

No sooner thought than gone; a myrtle-wood stick, my Montaigne, a wrap, and I am off!

No one in the fields. Our noble Catholic Provence leaves the earth to rest on Sundays. The farmhouses are closed, the dogs are alone in the yards. Now and then I meet the waggon of a carrier with its streaming hood, or an old woman wrapped in her mantle, colour of dead leaves, or mules in their gala trappings, saddle-cloths of blue and white matweed, scarlet pompons and silver bells, drawing at a trot a *carriole* of the farm hands going to mass; and away over there, through the fog, I see a boat on the pond and a fisherman standing to cast his net.

No possibility of reading on the way. The rain is falling in torrents and the tramontana is dashing it in bucketfuls on my face. I do the way at a

rush; and after a walk of three hours I see before me the little cypress wood in the middle of which Maillane shelters itself in dread of the wind.

Not a cat in the village streets; everybody is at high-mass. As I pass before the church the trombones are snorting and I see the lighted candles through the panes of coloured glass.

The poet's house is at the extreme end of the village, the last house to the left on the road to Saint-Remy, — a tiny house of one storey with a garden in front. I enter softly. No one! The door of the salon is closed, but I hear behind it some one who is walking about and talking. The voice and step are known to me. I stop a moment in the little whitewashed passage, my hand on the button of the door, quite agitated. My heart is beating. He is there. At work. Must I wait till the strophe is composed? I' faith, no. I will enter.

Ah! Parisians, when the poet of Maillane went to you to show Paris to his Mireille, and you saw him in your salons, that Chactas in a dress coat, a stiff collar, and the tall hat which hampered him, as did his fame, you thought that was Mistral. No, it was not he. There is but one Mistral in the world, he whom I surprised last Sunday in his village with a felt hat on one ear, a jacket, no waistcoat, a red catalan waistband round his loins, his eye blazing, the fire of inspiration on his cheek-bones, superb, with a kind smile, graceful as a Greek shepherd, and walking up and down, his hands in his pockets, making poetry.

"What? is it you?" cried Mistral, springing to embrace me. "What a good idea of yours to come! This is the fête day of Maillane. We have a band from Avignon, bulls, a procession, the *farandole;* it will all be magnificent. My mother will soon be home from mass; we shall have breakfast, and then, *zou!* we 'll go and see the pretty girls dance."

While he spoke, I looked with emotion at the little salon hung in light colours, which I had not seen for a long time, but where I had passed so many glorious hours. Nothing was changed. Still the same sofa with yellow squares, the two arm-chairs of straw, the Venus without arms, the Venus of Arles on the mantel, the portrait of the poet by Hébert, his photograph by Étienne Carjat and, in a corner, near the window, the desk (a shabby little registration-clerk's desk) piled with old volumes and dictionaries. At the centre of the desk I saw a large open manuscript. This was *Calendal,* — Mistral's new poem, which will appear on Christmas-day of the present year. This poem, Mistral has been working at for seven years, and it is now six months since he wrote the last line of it; but he dares not part from it yet. You understand, there is always a verse to polish, a rhyme more sonorous to find. Though Mistral composes wholly in the Provençal language, he writes and rewrites his lines as if all the world could read them in their own tongue and do justice to his labour as a good workman. Oh! the noble poet! it is surely of Mistral that Montaigne might have said: —

"Do you remember him of whom it was asked why he took such trouble about an art which could reach the knowledge of so few persons? 'The few are enough for me,' he answered. 'One is enough. None is enough.'"

I took the manuscript of *Calendal* in my hand, and I turned its leaves with emotion. Suddenly a burst of fifes and tambourines sounded in the street beneath the windows, and behold, my Mistral rushing to his closet, bringing out glasses and bottles, dragging the table to the middle of the salon, and opening the door to the musicians, saying to me as he did so: —

"Don't laugh. They have come to serenade me. I am a municipal counsellor."

The little room became crowded with people. They laid their tambourines on the chairs and put their old banner in a corner. Boiled wine circulated. Then, when several bottles had been emptied to the health of M. Frédéric and they had gravely conversed together about the festival — would the *farandole* be as fine as last year? would the bulls behave properly? — the musicians retired to go and greet the other members of the Council with a like serenade. At this moment Mistral's mother appeared.

In a turn of the hand the table is laid with a fine white cloth and two places. I know the customs of the house. I know that when Mistral has company his mother never sits at table. The poor old woman speaks only Provençal, and would feel

very ill at her ease with Frenchmen. Besides, she is wanted in the kitchen.

Dieu! the good meal I made that morning: a bit of roast kid, some mountain cheese, grape jelly, figs, and muscat grapes. The whole washed down with that good *Château-neuf des Papes* that has so fine a rosy colour in the glasses.

At dessert, I fetched the poem and laid it on the table before Mistral.

"But we said we would go out," said the poet, smiling.

"No, no! *Calendal! Calendal!*"

Mistral resigned himself, and in his soft and musical voice, beating time to his lines with his hand, he sang the first quatrain: "Of a girl mad with love, — I have told the sad adventure, — and I now will sing, if God so wills, a child of Cassis — a poor little sardine fisher."

Without, the bells were ringing for vespers, the fire-crackers burst in the square, the fifes and the tambourines marched up and down, and the bulls of the Camargue, held ready for the race, bellowed loudly.

I, my elbows on the cloth, and with tears in my eyes, I listened to the tale of the little Provençal fisher-lad.

Calendal was only a fisher-lad; love made him a hero. To win the heart of his darling, the lovely Estérella, he undertook marvellous things, beside which the labours of Hercules, those twelve labours, were nothing.

Once, taking a notion to be rich, he invented a formidable fishing-net, and with it he brought into port all the fish of the sea.

Again, 't was the terrible bandit of the gorges of Ollioules, Count Sévéran, whom he drove to his eyrie on the heights, with his cut-throats and concubines.

What a bold little chap, this Calendal! One day at Sainte-Baume, he met two parties of knights, come to settle their quarrel by orthodox blows at the tomb of Maître Jacques, — a Provençal who, an it please you, built the frame of the temple of Solomon. Calendal, fearing nothing, rushed headlong in the midst of the killing, appeasing the knights with his tongue.

Other superhuman undertakings! Among the rocks of Lure, was a forest of cedars, inaccessible, where never a woodsman dared to go. Calendal went. There he lived all alone for thirty days. During those thirty days the sound of his axe was heard, driven deep in the trees. The forest moaned; one after another its old, giant trees fell and were rolled to the foot of the precipice, so that when Calendal came down not a cedar remained on the mountain.

At last, in reward for such prowess, the sardine fisher obtains the love of Estérella, and is named first consul by the dwellers in Cassis. That is the tale of Calendal; but Calendal matters but little. What there is above all in the poem is — Provence; Provence of the sea, Provence of the mountain; with its history, legends, manners, cus-

toms, landscapes — a whole people, naïve and free, who have found their great poet before he dies. And now, line out your railways, plant those telegraph poles, drive the Provençal tongue from the schools! Provence will live eternally in *Mireille* and in *Calendal*.

"Enough of poesy!" cried Mistral, closing his manuscript. "Let us go and see the fête."

We started; the whole village was in the streets; a great north wind had swept the sky, which was gleaming, joyous, on the dark red roofs that were damp with rain. We got there in time to see the return of the procession. For an hour it was one interminable defiling of cowled penitents, white penitents, blue penitents, gray penitents; sisterhoods of veiled women, rose-coloured banners with golden flowers, great gilded wooden saints, much tarnished, carried on the shoulders of men, female saints in earthenware, coloured like idols, with bouquets in their hands, copes, monstrances, a green velvet dais, a crucifix swathed in white silk undulating to the breeze in the light of sun and torches, amid psalms, litanies, and bells madly ringing.

The procession over, the saints put back in their chapel, we went to see the bulls, then the games on the barn-floors, the wrestling, the three jumps, the strangle-cat, the bottle-game, and the whole of the pretty fun of a Provence fête. Night was coming on when we returned to Maillane. On the square, before the little café where Mistral goes in the evening to play a game with his friend Zidore, a great

bonfire was lighted. The *farandole* was organized. Open-work paper lanterns were lighted in the dark corners: youth took the field; and soon, at the call of the tambourines, began, around the flame, a whirling, noisy dance, which would last all night.

After supper, too weary to go about any longer, Mistral and I went up to his chamber, a modest peasant's-chamber, with two large beds. The walls are not papered, the rafters of the ceiling are visible. Four years ago, when the Academy gave to the author of *Mireille* that prize of three thousand francs, Madame Mistral had an idea.

"Suppose we paper and ceil your room?"

"No! no!" cried Mistral, "that's the money of poets, don't touch it."

So the room was left bare; but so long as the money of poets lasted those who rapped at Mistral's door found his purse open.

I had brought up the sheets of *Calendal*, for I wanted to make him read me a passage before I went to sleep. Mistral chose the pottery incident; and here it is in a few words: —

The scene is a great repast, I know not where. They bring upon the table a magnificent service of the glazed pottery of Moustiers. In the centre of each plate, designed in blue on the enamel, is a Provençal subject; a whole history of the region is there. It is wonderful to see with what love the beautiful service is described, a verse to every plate, and each a little poem of naïve and learned workmanship, finished as an idyll of Theocritus.

While Mistral was repeating his poems in that beautiful Provençal language, more than three-fourths Latin, the language that queens once spoke and none but shepherds can now understand, I admired within me that man; and, reflecting on the condition of ruin in which he found his mother-tongue and what he had made of it, I fancied myself in one of those old palaces of the princes of Baux, such as we still see in the Alpilles, roofless, without rails to the porticos, without sashes to the windows, the trefoil of the arches broken, the blazon on the doorways eaten by mosses, hens marauding in the courts of honour, porkers wallowing beneath the dainty columns of the galleries, donkeys browsing in the chapel where the grass is green, and pigeons drinking from the holy-water basins now filled by rain, while among these dilapidated remains of the past, two or three families have built themselves huts in the flanks of the old palace. Then, some fine day, the son of a peasant is seized with admiration for these grand ruins; he is indignant at seeing them so profaned: quick, quick, he drives out the cattle and the poultry from the court of honour and — the fairies lending him a hand — he reconstructs the great staircase, replaces the panels of the walls, the sashes of the windows, builds up the towers, regilds the throne and its hall, and raises once more upon its base the vast old palace of other days, where popes and empresses lodged and lived.

That restored palace is the Provençal language.

That son of a peasant is Mistral.

ORANGES.

In Paris oranges have the melancholy air of fruit that is dropped from the tree and picked up from the ground. At the time when they arrive, in the cold and rainy midwinter, their high-coloured skins, their excessive perfume in our land of tranquil tastes, give them an exotic aspect, a little bohemian. Of a misty night they perambulate the side-walks, heaped in their little handcarts, by the dull light of a red paper lantern. A monotonous and feeble cry escorts them, lost in the roll of carriages and the rattle of omnibuses: "Two sous a Valentia!"

To three-fourths of all Parisians, this fruit gathered afar, monotonous in its roundness, in which the tree has left nothing but a small green twig, seems to belong to confectionery, to sweetmeats. The tissue paper which wraps it, the fêtes it accompanies, contribute to this impression. Toward the last of the year especially, thousands of oranges disseminated through the streets, the peels that lie about in the mud of the gutters, make one think of some gigantic Christmas tree shaking over Paris its branches laden with imitation fruit. Not a corner where we do not find them. In the large

show windows selected and arranged; at the door of prisons and hospitals, among packages of biscuit and piles of apples; before the entrances to the Sunday balls and theatres. Their exquisite perfume mingles with the odour of gas, the scraping of fiddles, the dust of the benches in paradise. We have come to forget that oranges grow on orange-trees, for while the fruit arrives from the South in boxes, the trimmed, transformed, disguised tree of the greenhouse where it has passed the winter, makes but a short apparition in our gardens.

To know oranges well, you must see them at home, in the Balearic Isles, in Sardinia, Corsica, Algeria, in the blue, gilded air and the warm atmosphere of the Mediterranean. I remember a little grove of orange-trees at the gates of Blidah; ah! it is there that they are beautiful. Amid the dark, lustrous, varnished foliage the fruits have the splendour of coloured glass; they gild the environing air with the dazzling halo that surrounds a glowing flower. Here and there little clearings through the branches showed the ramparts of the town, the minaret of a mosque, the dome of a saint's tomb, and, towering above them all, the enormous mass of Atlas, green at its base, and crowned with snow like a fleece or a white fur softly fallen.

One night while I was there, I do not know by what phenomenon, unknown for thirty years, that upper zone of wintry hoar-frost shook itself down upon the sleeping town, and Blidah awoke transformed, powdered to white. In that Algerine air,

so light, so pure, the snow was like a dust of mother-of-pearl. It had all the reflections of a white peacock's plume. Most beautiful of all was the orange grove. The solid leaves held the snow intact, like sherbet on a lacquered dish; and the fruit, all powdered with the hoar-frost, had a softened splendour, a discreet glow, like gold veiled lightly in gauze. The scene had vaguely the effect of a church festival, of red cassocks under robes of lace, the golden altars swathed in guipure.

But my best memory of oranges comes to me from Barbicaglia, a great garden near Ajaccio, where I went for my siesta in the heat of the day. Here the orange-trees, taller and more spreading than those of Blidah, come down to the main road, from which the garden is separated by only a ditch and an evergreen hedge. Immediately beyond is the sea, the vast blue sea. . . Oh! what good hours did I pass in that garden! Above my head the orange-trees, in bloom and in fruit, exhaled the perfume of their essence. From time to time a ripe orange, as though weighed down by the heat, fell beside me with a flat, echoless sound on the fecund earth. I had only to put out my hand. The fruit was superb, of a crimson red within. It seemed to me exquisite—and then, the horizon was so beautiful! Between the leaves the sea put azure spaces, dazzling as pieces of broken glass shimmering in the quiver of the air. And with all that, the motion of the waves stirring the atmosphere at a great distance with a cadenced murmur which rocked you like an unseen boat,

and the warmth, and the odour of the oranges! Ah! how good it was to sleep in the garden of Barbicaglia!

Sometimes, however, at the pleasantest moment of the siesta, the roll of drums would rouse me with a start. It was those wretched little drummers, practising below on the main-road. Through gaps in the hedge I could see the brass of their instruments and their great white aprons on their red trousers. To shelter themselves a little from the blinding light which the dust of the road reflected pitilessly, the poor young devils would plant themselves at the foot of the garden in the scanty shadow of the hedge. And they drummed! and they were so hot! Then, wrenching myself forcibly from my hypnotism, I amused myself by flinging them some of that beautiful golden-red fruit which hung close to my hand. The drummer first aimed at stopped. There was a moment's hesitation, a look went round to see whence came that splendid orange rolling before him into the ditch; then he picked it up very fast and bit into it with his teeth without peeling off the skin.

I remember also that close to Barbicaglia and separated from it by a low wall, was a queer little garden that I could look into from the height where I lay. 'Twas a small corner of earth laid out in bourgeois fashion. Its paths, yellow with sand and bordered with very green box, and the two cypresses at its entrance gave it the appearance of a Marseillaise surburban villa garden. Not an atom of shade. At the farther end was a building

of white stone with cellar windows on a line with the ground. At first, I thought it a country-house; then looking closer, a cross that surmounted it, an inscription cut into the stone that I could see from a distance without distinguishing the letters, made me recognize it as the tomb of a Corsican family. All around Ajaccio, there are many of these mortuary chapels, built in gardens of their own. The family comes on Sunday to pay a visit to its dead. Thus treated, death is less lugubrious than amid the confusion of cemeteries. The feet of friends alone break the silence.

From my station above, I could see a good old man coming and going tranquilly along the paths. Every day he trimmed the trees, he spaded, watered, and picked off the faded flowers with infinite care; then, when the sun was setting, he always entered the little chapel where the dead of his family were sleeping; and he put away his spades and rakes and watering-pots, with the tranquillity, the serenity of a cemetery gardener. And yet, without himself being aware of it, the good man worked with a certain gravity; he subdued all noises and closed the door of the vault discreetly, as if fearing to awaken an inmate. In the great glowing silence the neatness of the little garden was never troubled by even a bird, and its neighbourhood had nothing sad about it. Only, the sea seemed more immense, the heavens higher, and the endless siesta shed around the place, amid a troubled nature oppressive in its strength of life, the feeling of eternal repose.

THE TWO INNS.

It happened when returning from Nîmes, one July afternoon. The heat was exhausting. As far as the eye could reach the white road, smoking, powdered along between olive-gardens and scrub-oaks, beneath a silvery sun-glare that filled the whole sky. Not a patch of shade, not a breath of wind. Nothing but the vibration of that hot air, and the strident noise of the grasshoppers, a crazy, deafening music to quick time, which seemed like the actual sonority of that vast luminous pulsation. I had walked, as it were in the desert, for two whole hours when suddenly, before me, a group of white houses defined themselves in the dust from the road. This was what was called the "relay of Saint Vincent;" five or six buildings, long barns with red roofs, a drinking trough without water, in a clump of spindling fig-trees; and, quite at the farther end, two large inns facing each other from opposite sides of the road.

The neighbouring of these two inns had something peculiar about it. On one side a great new building, full of life and animation; all doors open, the diligence stopping before it, the smoking horses there unharnessed, the travellers getting out to drink in haste on the road in the scanty

shadow of the walls, the courtyard crowded with mules and carts and the carters lying under the sheds for coolness. Within, shouts, oaths, fists pounding on the tables, the rattling of glasses and billiard-balls, lemonade bottles popping; and above this din a joyous, ringing voice, singing in a tone that shook the windows:—

"My pretty Margoton
Early has risen,
Taken her silver bowl,
Gone to the cistern."

The inn directly opposite, on the contrary, was silent and as if abandoned. Grass was under the gateway, shutters were broken; above the door a rusty twig of box hung down like a broken feather, the step of the door was lower than the stones of the street. It was all so poor, so pitiable, that it was really a charity to stop there and drink a drop.

On entering I found a long hall, silent and gloomy, which the dazzling light of three large windows seemed to render gloomier and more silent still. A few lame tables on which were glasses dim with dust, a ragged billiard-table holding out its pockets like almsbags, a yellow divan, an old counter, were slumbering there in heavy, unwholesome heat. And flies! flies! never did I see so many; on the ceilings, sticking to the windows, to the glasses, in clusters. When I opened the door there was a buzz, and a humming of wings as if I had entered a bee-hive.

At the farther end of the hall, in the embrasure

of a window stood a woman, her face against the panes, quite absorbed in looking out into the street. I called her twice: —

"Hey! hostess!"

She turned round slowly, and showed me a poor peasant face, wrinkled, fissured, the colour of the soil, framed in long lappets of rusty lace, such as the old women wear in these parts. And yet she was not an old woman; but tears had withered her.

"What do you want?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"To sit down a minute, and drink something."

She looked at me much surprised, without moving from her place, as if she did not understand me.

"Is not this an inn?"

The woman sighed.

"Yes — it is an inn, if you choose. But why don't you go, like others, over the way? It is gayer there."

"It is too gay for me. I prefer to stay here."

And without waiting for any reply I seated myself at a table.

When she was sure that I meant what I said, the landlady bustled about with a very busy air, opening drawers, moving bottles, dusting glasses, disturbing the flies. One felt that the arrival of a traveller to serve was quite an event. Now and then the poor creature paused and put her hand to her head as if she despaired of accomplishing anything.

Then she went into a room at the end of the hall, and I heard her jingling keys, trying them in

the locks, opening the bread-box, blowing, dusting, washing plates. From time to time, a heavy sigh or a stifled sob.

After a quarter of an hour of this performance I had before me a dish of *passerilles* (dried grapes) an old loaf of Beaucaire bread as hard as sandstone, and a bottle of sour wine.

"You are served," said the strange creature; and she turned away hastily to resume her station at the window.

While I drank I tried to make her talk.

"You don't have many people here, do you, my poor woman?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, never any one. When we were alone in the business, things were very different. Then we had the relays, and the hunters to dine in the duck-season, and carriages all the year round. But since our neighbours came and settled here we have lost everything. People prefer to go opposite. They think it is too gloomy here. The fact is, this house is not very agreeable. I am not handsome, I have fever and ague, and my two little ones are dead. Over there, on the contrary, they are laughing all the time. It is an Arlesian woman who keeps that inn, a handsome woman with laces and three rows of gold chain round her neck. The conductor is her lover, and he takes the diligence there. Besides which, there's a lot of cajolers as chamber-maids. And that brings her such custom! She gets all the young men of Bezouces, Redessan, and Jon-

quières. The bagmen come out of their way to stop there. As for me, I am left all day alone, doing nothing."

She said it with an absent, indifferent air, her forehead still leaning against the panes. Evidently, there was something in that opposite inn which absorbed her mind.

All of a sudden, on the other side of the way, a great commotion took place. The diligence was preparing to start. I heard the cracks of the whip, the postilion's horn, and the maids about the doorway crying out: "Adiousas! Adiousas!" and louder than all, that strong voice I had heard before, singing more vigorously than ever: —

"Taken her silver bowl,
Gone to the cistern,
Sees not approaching her
Three cavaliers."

At the sound of that voice the landlady's whole body quivered, and, turning to me, she said in a low voice: —

"Do you hear him? That is my husband. Does n't he sing well?"

I looked at her, amazed.

"Your husband! Does *he* go over there, too?"

Then she, with a heart-broken air, but very gently: —

"It can't be helped, monsieur. Men are like that; they hate to see tears; and I am always crying since I lost my little ones. Besides, this great barrack where no one comes is so gloomy. And when he is quite tired of it my poor José goes over

there to drink, and as he has a fine voice the Arlesian woman makes him sing. Hush! there he is again."

And, trembling, her hands outstretched, with big tears rolling down her cheeks, making her look uglier than ever, she stood there as if in ecstasy to hear her José singing for the Arlesian woman: —

"My pretty Margoton
Early has risen."

AT MILIANAH.

NOTES OF TRAVEL.

THIS time I take you to spend a day in a pretty little town of Algeria, two or three hundred leagues from my mill. That will make a little change from tambourines and grasshoppers.

It is going to rain, the sky is gray, the crests of Mont Zaccar are swathed in fog. A melancholy Sunday. In my little hotel-chamber with its window looking to the Arab ramparts, I try to amuse myself by lighting cigarettes. The library of the hotel has been placed at my disposal. Between a full and detailed history of the registration and a novel of Paul de Kock I discover a dilapidated volume of Montaigne. I open the book at random and re-read the admirable letter on the death of the Boétie. I am now more dreamy and sombre than ever. A few drops of rain are beginning to fall. Every drop, as it falls on the window sill, makes a great star in the dust that has settled there since the rains of last year. The book slips from my fingers, and I spend long minutes in gazing at that melancholy splash.

Two o'clock rings from the tower of the town — the former tomb of a saint, the frail white walls of which I can see from here. Poor devil of a saint!

how little he thought thirty years ago, that he would carry on his breast the huge face of a municipal clock, and that every Sunday at two o'clock he would give to the churches of Milianah the signal to ring for vespers. Ding dong! there go the bells! and long will they ring. Decidedly, this room is melancholy. Those big matutinal spiders called philosophical thoughts are spinning their webs in every corner. I shall go out.

I reach the great square. The band of the 3rd infantry, which a little rain does not frighten, is gathering round its leader. At one of the windows of headquarters the general appears, surrounded by his young ladies; on the square the sub-prefect is walking about arm in arm with the justice of peace. Half a dozen little Arabs, nearly naked, are playing marbles in a corner with ferocious yells. Over there is an old Jew in rags seeking for the sunshine he left on that spot yesterday, and quite surprised not to find it. "One, two, three!" and the band starts off with an old mazurka by Talexy which the barrel-organs were playing under my window a year ago. That mazurka annoyed me then; to-day it moves me to tears.

Oh! how lucky they are those musicians of the 3rd infantry. Their eyes fixed on their semi-quavers, tipsy with rhythm and racket, they are thinking of nothing but counting their time. Their soul, their whole soul is in that square of paper the size of my hand which trembles at the end of their instruments between two brass

pins. "One, two, three!" That's the whole of it for those worthy fellows; never do the national airs they play give them a thought of home-sickness. Alas! I, who am not of the band, am distressed by the band, and I depart.

Where shall I spend it, this dismal Sunday afternoon? . . Good! Sid' Omar's shop is open. I'll spend it with Sid' Omar.

Though he has a shop, Sid' Omar is not a shopkeeper. He is a prince of the blood, the son of a former Dey of Algiers who was strangled by the janissaries. On the death of his father, Sid' Omar took refuge in Milianah with his mother, whom he adored, and there he lived some years philosophically as a great seigneur, among his hounds and falcons, his horses and his women, in pretty, airy palaces full of orange-trees and fountains. Then came the French. Sid' Omar, at first our enemy and the ally of Abd-el-Kader, ended by quarrelling with the emir and making his submission to us. Abd-el-Kader, to avenge himself, entered Milianah, during Sid' Omar's absence, pillaged his palaces, cut down his orange-trees, carried off his horses and women, and caused his mother's throat to be crushed by the shutting down of the lid of a great coffer. The anger of Sid' Omar was terrible. Instantly he entered the French service, and we had no better or more ferocious soldier than he during all the time the war against the emir lasted. That war over, Sid' Omar returned to Milianah; but even to-day

if you mention the name of Abd-el-Kader in his presence, he turns pale, and his eyes blaze.

Sid' Omar is sixty years old. In spite of years and the smallpox, his face is still handsome; long lashes, the glance of a woman, a charming smile, the air of a prince. Ruined by the war, nothing is left of his former opulence but a farm on the Chélif plain, and a house at Milianah, where he lives in bourgeois fashion with his three sons, whom he is bringing up under his own eye. The native chieftains hold him in great veneration. When a discussion arises they willingly take him as umpire; and his decision is almost always regarded as law. He seldom goes out; you will find him every afternoon in a shop adjoining his house, which opens on the street. The furniture of this place is not splendid, — white-washed walls, a circular wooden bench, cushions, pipes, and two foot-warmers. That is where Sid' Omar gives audience and lays down the law. Solomon in a shop.

To-day, being Sunday, the company is numerous. A dozen sheiks are crouched in their burnous, round the room. Each has beside him a large pipe and a little cup of coffee in a delicate filigree holder. I enter; no one stirs. From his place Sid' Omar sends me his most charming smile and invites me with his hand to sit near him on a large cushion of yellow silk. Then, with his finger on his lips, he makes me a sign to listen.

This is why: The caïd of the Benizougzougs

having a dispute with a Milianah Jew about a bit of ground, both parties had agreed to carry the matter to Sid' Omar and submit to his decision. Appointment was made for the same day; the witnesses were summoned; when, all of a sudden, the Jew changed his mind, and came alone, without witnesses, to declare that he preferred to submit the matter to the French justice of peace, rather than Sid' Omar. That was how the affair stood at my entrance.

The Jew — old, with a dirty beard, maroon jacket, blue stockings, velvet cap — raised his nose to heaven, rolled supplicating eyes, kissed the slippers of Sid' Omar, bowed his head and knelt with clasped hands. I don't understand Arabic, but from this pantomime, during which the words "joustice of peace, joustice of peace" recurred incessantly, I could guess the whole of the shrewd meaning: —

"We do not doubt Sid' Omar; Sid' Omar is wise, Sid' Omar is just. But the joustice of peace will do better by us."

The audience, indignant, remained impassible, as Arabs are wont to be. Stretched out upon his cushion, eyes hazy, the amber-mouth-piece between his lips, Sid' Omar — god of irony — smiled as he listened. Suddenly, in the midst of his wiliest sentence, the Jew is interrupted by an energetic "Caramba!" which stops him short; and at the same instant a Spanish colonist, who was there as a witness for the caïd, left his place, and approaching Iscariot poured upon him a deluge of impreca-

tions in all tongues and all colours — among them a certain French vocable too gross, monsieur, to repeat here. The son of Sid' Omar, who understood French, blushed at hearing such a word in his father's presence and left the place. (Remember this trait of Arab education.)

The audience was still impassible, Sid' Omar still smiling. The Jew rose and backed towards the door, trembling with fear, but still warbling his eternal "joustice of peace, joustice of peace." He went out. The Spaniard furious, rushed after him and twice — vli! vlan! — struck him in the face. Iscariot fell on his knees, his arms crossed. The Spaniard, rather ashamed, returned to the shop. As soon as he had entered, the Jew picked himself up, and turned an artful eye on the variegated crowd that surrounded him; a crowd in which there were men of all skins — Maltese, Mahonese, negroes, Arabs, all united in hatred to a Jew and delighting in seeing him maltreated. Iscariot hesitated a moment; then, taking an Arab by the flap of his burnous, —

"You saw it, Achmed, you saw it; you were there. The Christian struck me. You must be witness — yes, yes, you shall be witness."

The Arab freed his burnous and pushed away the Jew. He knows nothing; he saw nothing; he was looking the other way.

"But you, Kadour, you saw it; you saw the Christian strike me," cries the luckless Iscariot to a big negro who was peeling a Barbary fig.

The negro spat in sign of contempt, and walked

away — he had seen nothing. Neither had a little Maltese fellow seen anything with his coal-black eyes glittering malignantly beneath his beretta; nor she, that Mahonese woman with the brick-coloured skin, who ran off laughing, carrying a basket of pomegranates on her head.

In vain did Iscariot shout, beg, beseech — not a witness, no one had seen anything. By great good luck two of his co-religionists happened to come by at this moment, skirting the walls with a hang-dog look. The Jew spied them.

"Quick, quick, brothers! quick to the joustice of peace! You saw him, you two; you saw him how he struck the old man."

Had they seen it? I should think so!

Great excitement in Sid' Omar's shop. The coffeeman refilled the cups and relit the pipes. They talked, they laughed with all their teeth. It is so amusing to see a Jew beaten! In the midst of the general clatter I slipped softly to the door; I wanted to wander about the Jewish quarter and see how Iscariot's co-religionists were taking the affront thus put upon their brother.

"Come and dine to-night, *moussieu*," called out the good Sid' Omar.

I accepted, thanked him, and went out.

In the Jewish quarter every one was afoot. The affair had already made a great noise. No one was inside the booths. Embroiderers, tailors, harness-makers — all Israel was in the streets. The men, wearing velvet caps and blue stockings,

gesticulated noisily in groups. The women, pale, puffy, stiff as wooden idols in their tight gowns with gilded stomachers, their faces framed in heavy black bandeaux, were going from group to group, caterwauling. Just as I arrived a great impulse was given to the crowd. They pressed together and hurried along. Accompanied by his witnesses, the Jew, the hero of the adventure, passed between two hedges of his co-religionists under a rain of exhortations: —

"Avenge yourself, brother! Avenge us! Avenge the Jewish people! Fear nothing; you have the law on your side."

A frightful dwarf, smelling of pitch and old leather, came up to me with a piteous air and said, sighing heavily: —

"You see how they treat us poor Jews. He is an old man! look at him. They have nearly killed him."

And, in truth, poor Iscariot did look more dead than alive. He passed in front of me — eyes dulled, face ghastly; not walking but dragging himself along. A good indemnity alone could cure him. Consequently, they did not take him to a doctor, but to a lawyer.

There are many lawyers in Algeria, almost as many as there are grasshoppers. The trade is a good one, they say. At any rate, it has this advantage, it can be taken up at any time, without examinations, without sureties, without probation. Just as in Paris we make ourselves men of letters,

in Algeria they make themselves lawyers. It is enough to know a little French, Spanish, Arabic, to have a code at your fingers' ends, and, above all, the temperament of the trade.

As for the functions of this agent, they are varied; by turns solicitor, barrister, court official, expert, interpreter, book-keeper, commissioner, public writer, he is the Maître Jacques of the colony. Only, Harpagon had but one Maître Jacques, and the colony has more than it wants. At Milianah alone they count by dozens. As a general thing, these gentlemen, to avoid the cost of an office, receive their clients at the café in the great square, and hold their consultations — do they consult at all? — between absinthe and *champoreau*.

It was towards the café in the great square that the worthy Iscariot was now proceeding, flanked by his two witnesses. We will not follow him.

In leaving the Jewish quarter I passed before the house of what is called the Arab Bureau. Outside, with its slate roof and the French flag floating above it, you would take it for the town-hall of some village. I know the interpreter, and I enter to smoke a cigar with him. One way or another I shall manage to kill it, this sunless Sunday!

The courtyard in front of the bureau is encumbered with Arabs in rags. Fifty, at least, are in attendance, crouching along the walls in their burnous. This Bedouin antechamber exhales —

though in the open air — a strong odour of human skins. Let us pass through quickly. In the bureau I find the interpreter involved with two big brawlers, entirely naked under long greasy coverlets, who are relating with savage gestures some story, I know not what, of a stolen chaplet. I seat myself on a mat in the corner, and look on. . . A pretty costume that of interpreters, and how jauntily the interpreter of Milianah wears it! Clothes and man, they look as if they had been invented for each other. The costume is sky-blue, with black froggings and gilt buttons that shine. The interpreter himself is fair, rosy, and curled; a charming blue hussar, full of humour and whimsicality; quite talkative — he speaks all languages — and rather sceptical, having known Renan at the Oriental College: he is a great lover of sport; as much at his ease in an Arab bivouac as he is in the salons of the sub-prefecture, mazurking better than any one and making kouss-kouss better still. A Parisian, — to say it all in one word, — and you need not be surprised that the women dote upon him. In the matter of dandyism, he has but one rival — the sergeant of the Arab Bureau. The latter, in his broadcloth tunic and his gaiters with mother-of-pearl buttons, is the despair and envy of the whole garrison. Detailed to the Arab Bureau he is relieved from fatigue duty, and shows himself about the streets in white gloves, hair freshly curled, with registers under his arm. He is admired, and feared. He is an authority.

Decidedly, this tale of the stolen chaplet threatens to be very long. Good-bye! I won't wait for the end of it.

As I depart I find the courtyard antechamber in commotion. The crowd is pressing round a tall Arab, pale and proud, draped in a black burnous. This man had a tussle in the Zaccar a week earlier with a panther. The panther is dead, but the man has an arm badly bitten. Night and morning he comes to have his wound dressed at the Arab Bureau, and every time he comes he is stopped in the courtyard and made to relate the whole adventure. He speaks slowly, in a beautiful deep voice. Now and then he opens his burnous and shows, fastened to his breast, the left arm bound with bloody bandages.

I was hardly in the street before a storm burst violently. Rain, thunder, lightning, sirocco. Quick! to shelter! I darted through a gate, hap-hazard, and fell into the midst of a nest of bohemians, crouching under the arcades of a Moorish court. This court is next to the mosque of Milianah; it is the habitual refuge of Mussulman vagrants, and is therefore called the "court of the paupers."

Great gaunt hounds, covered with vermin, came snuffing round me with a wicked air. Leaning against one of the pillars of the gallery, I endeavoured to put a good face on the matter, and, without speaking to any one, I watched the rain ricochetting on the coloured tiles of the courtyard. The beggars were on the ground in piles.

Near me a young woman, almost handsome, with bare neck and legs, and heavy iron bracelets on wrists and ankles, was singing a strange air on three sad, whining notes. As she sang, she nursed at her breast a little naked child of a bronze-red colour, while with her one free arm she pounded barley in a stone mortar. The rain, driven by the cruel wind, soaked at times the legs of the woman and the body of her nursling. She paid no heed to it, but continued to sing through the storm, crushing the barley and suckling the child.

The tempest slackened. Profiting by a break in the clouds, I hastened away from the Moorish court in the direction of Sid' Omar and his dinner. It was high time. Crossing the great square, I again met the old Jew. He was leaning on the lawyer's arm, his witnesses walked joyfully after him, and a band of villanous little Jew boys skipped along with the party. Their faces were radiant. The lawyer had taken charge of the affair, and was on his way to ask for an indemnity of two thousand francs.

At Sid' Omar's a sumptuous dinner. The dining-room opens on an elegant Moorish court, where two or three fountains are singing. Excellent Turkish repast, recommended to Baron Brisse. Among other dishes, I remember a chicken with almonds, kouss-kouss à la vanille, a turtle stuffed with meat — a little heavy perhaps, but very appetizing — and biscuits made of honey, called *bôuchées de cadi*. By way of wine, champagne only. In

spite of the Mussulman law, Sid' Omar drank a little of it, when the servants' backs were turned. After dinner we removed to our host's bedchamber, and there they brought us confectionery, pipes, and coffee. The furniture of this room is of the simplest: a divan, a few mats, at the farther end a very high large bed, on which red cushions embroidered in gold are scattered about. Hanging to the wall is an old Turkish picture representing the exploits of a certain admiral, Hamadi. It seems that in Turkey painters use but one colour to each picture; this picture is vowed to green. The sea, the sky, the ship, Admiral Hamadi himself, all are green — and what a green!

Arab customs require you to retire early. Coffee taken and the pipes smoked, I wished good-night to my host, and left him with his women.

Where shall I finish my evening? It is too early to go to bed; the bugles of the spahis have not yet sounded taps. Besides, the golden cushions of Sid' Omar dance fantastic *farandoles* about me, and would hinder me from sleeping. Lo! here I am before a theatre; suppose I enter for a moment?

The theatre of Milianah is an old forage storehouse, more or less disguised for stage purposes. Huge glass cups which they fill with oil between the acts serve as lustres. The pit stands; the occupants of the orchestra sit on benches. The galleries are very proud because they have straw chairs. All around the audience chamber is a long

dark passage, unfloored, where one might think one's self in the street. The play has already begun when I enter. To my great surprise, the actors are not bad; I speak of the men; they have spirit and animation, life. Nearly all are amateurs, soldiers of the third infantry; the regiment is proud of them, and comes nightly to applaud their performance.

As for the women, alas! they are ever and always that "eternal feminine" of the little provincial stage — pretentious, exaggerated, and false. Among them, however, there are two who interest me, two Milianah Jewesses, very young, who are making their first appearance in public. Their parents are in the hall and seem enchanted. They are convinced that their daughters will earn millions of douros in the business. The legend of Rachel, Israelite, millionaire, and actress, has spread among the Jews of the Orient. Nothing could be more comical, yet affecting, than those two little Jewesses on the stage. They kept themselves timidly in a corner of it, painted, powdered, low-necked, and perfectly rigid. They were cold; they felt ashamed. Now and then, they sputtered a speech without understanding it, and while they spoke their great black Hebrew eyes wandered round the audience-chamber, stupefied.

I leave the theatre. Amid the darkness that surrounds me, I hear cries in the corner of the square. A few Maltese, no doubt, who are engaged in explaining something with knives.

I return to my hotel, slowly, by way of the ramparts. Adorable odours of orange-trees and thuyas rise from the plain. The air is soft, the sky almost cloudless. Below, at the farther end of the road, rises the ghost of an old wall, the remains of some ancient temple. That wall is sacred. Every day the Arab women flock there to hang their votive offerings upon it, — fragments of stuffs, long tresses of ruddy hair tied with silver threads, pieces of burnous. All this is floating in the moonrays to the soft breath of the balmy night.

THE LOCUSTS.

ONE more recollection of Algeria, and then we will return to my mill.

The night of my arrival at that farm-house in the Sahel I could not sleep. The novelty of the country, the agitation of the voyage, the barking of the jackals, also an enervating oppressive heat, a choking atmosphere as if the meshes of the mosquito net did not allow of the passing of a breath of air. When I opened my window at dawn a heavy summer fog, slowly moving, fringed at its edges with black and rose, floated in the air like a cloud of smoke on a battlefield. Not a leaf stirred, and in the beautiful gardens which lay before my eyes, the vines planted at regular distances on the slopes exposed to the sun which makes those sugary wines, the fruits of Europe sheltering in a shady corner, the little orange-trees, the mandarins in long microscopic lines — all these wore the same mournful aspect, the stillness of leaves expecting a storm. The banana-trees themselves, those great reeds of a tender green, always shaken by a breeze ruffling their delicate fine hair, now rose silent and erect in regular bunches.

I stood a moment looking at this marvellous plantation, where all the trees in the world were collected, giving, each in its season, their flowers and their exiled fruits. Between the wheat-fields and the groves of cork-trees, a stream of water shone, refreshing to the sight on this suffocating morning; and while I admired the luxury, the perfect order of all before me, and the beautiful farm-house with its Moorish arcades, the terraces white in the dawn, the stables and sheds around it, I reflected that twenty years earlier, when the good people who owned the place had come to settle in this valley of the Sahel, they had found nothing but a wretched hut and a barren land bristling with dwarf palms and cactus. All to create, all to construct. At every moment revolts of the Arabs. The plough was left in the furrow to fire the musket. Besides this, diseases, ophthalmias, fevers, failure of crops, the groping of inexperience, struggles with a narrow-minded administration forever changing. What efforts! What fatigue! What incessant watchfulness!

And even now, though the bad times were over, and fortune was dearly won, they both, the man and his wife, were the first to be up in the morning. At this early hour I heard them going and coming in the great kitchens of the lower floor, superintending the coffee of the labourers. Soon a bell rang, and a moment later workmen defiled along the road, — vineyard men from Burgundy, Kabyle labourers in rags wearing the red fez, Mahonese navvies with bare legs, Maltese, Italians; an in-

congruous, dissimilar populace, difficult to manage. To each of them the farmer, standing before the door, gave his task for the day in a curt voice, rather roughly. When this was over, the good man raised his head, examined the sky with an anxious air, and seeing me at the window he said: "Bad weather for farming; here's the sirocco."

And sure enough, as the sun rose, puffs of burning, suffocating air came to us from the South as if from the door of an oven opening and shutting. Presently one knew not where to put one's self, or what to do. The whole morning passed thus We took coffee on the straw mats in the gallery, without courage to speak or stir. The dogs lying at full length in exhausted attitudes sought coolness on the flags. Breakfast revived us a little, a plentiful and singular breakfast, in which there were carp, trout, wild boar, hedgehog, Staouëli butter, wines of Crescia, guavas, bananas, a mass of strange food in keeping with the complex Nature that surrounded us. . . We were about to rise from table. Suddenly at the glass-door, closed to protect us from the furnace heat of the garden, loud cries were heard: "The locusts! the locusts!"

My host turned pale, like a man to whom a great disaster is told, and we rushed out hastily. During the next ten minutes the house, lately so calm, was filled with the sound of rushing feet, confused voices, lost in the agitation of that warning. From the shade of the vestibules where some were still sleeping, the servants sprang forth, with sticks, scythes, flails, making them ring on all the

metal utensils they could lay their hands on, copper caldrons, warming-pans, saucepans. The shepherds blew their pipes in the pastures. Others had conch-shells and hunting-horns. The uproar was frightful, discordant, while high above it all rang the shrill high note, the "Yoo! yoo! yoo!" of the Arab women rushing in from a neighbouring *douar*. It seems that often a great noise, a sonorous jarring of the air, is sufficient to drive off the locusts and prevent them from alighting.

But where were they, these terrible beasts? In the sky, pulsing with heat, I saw nothing but a cloud on the horizon, brassy, compact as a hail-cloud, coming on with the noise of a wind-storm through the branches of a forest. This was the locusts. Supporting one another with their dry extended wings they flew in a mass; and in spite of our shouts, our efforts, on they came in a cloud casting upon the plain an enormous shadow. Soon they arrived above us and we saw for a second on the edges of the cloud a fringe, a rent. Like the first stones of a hailstorm, a few detached themselves, distinct, reddish; then the whole cloud broke up and the rain of insects fell thick and noisily. The fields, as far as the eye could reach, were covered with locusts, enormous locusts, thick as my finger.

Now the massacre began. A horrid sound of crushing, like that of trampled straw. With harrows, spades, ploughs, they broke up that living soil; but the more they killed, the more there were to kill. The insects swarmed in layers, their long legs laced

together. Those at the top made leaps of fear, jumping at the noses of the horses harnessed for this strange labour. The farm-dogs, those of the *douar*, driven into the fields, sprang upon them and ground them furiously with their teeth. At this moment two companies of Turcos, bugles sounding, came to the succour of the luckless colonists and the butchery changed aspect.

Instead of crushing the locusts the soldiers spread long trains of gunpowder and blew them up.

Weary with killing, sickened by the fetid odour, I returned to the house. Within it there were almost as many locusts as without. They had entered by the doors, the windows, the flues of the chimney. Along the panels and wainscotings, in the curtains already riddled, they crawled, fell, flew, and climbed the white walls, casting gigantic shadows that doubled their ugliness. And always that horrifying odour. We were forced, at dinner, to go without water. The cisterns, basins, wells, fish-pond were all infected. That night in my room where quantities had been killed, I heard them swarming under the furniture, with that crackling of their shell-like wings which sounds like the bursting of pods under heat. This night again I could not sleep. Besides, every one on the farm was astir. Flames were running along the surface of the ground in all directions from one end of the plain to the other. The Turcos were still killing.

The next day, when I opened my window the

locusts were gone; but what ruin they had left behind them! Not a flower, not a blade of grass; all was black, devoured, calcined. The banana, the apricot, the peach-trees, the orange-trees could only be recognized by the shape of their stripped branches; the charm and the floating grace of foliage which is the life of the tree were gone. The pieces of water and the cisterns were being cleaned. Everywhere labourers were digging the earth to kill the eggs laid by the insects. Every turf was turned, and carefully broken up. And one's heart ached to see the thousand white roots full of sap which appeared in this destruction of the fruitful earth.

THE ELIXIR OF THE REVEREND PÈRE GAUCHER.

"DRINK that, neighbour, and you will tell tales of it."

And drop by drop, with the minute care of a lapidary counting pearls, the curé of Graveson poured me out a glassful of a green, gilded, warm, sparkling, exquisite liqueur. My stomach was all sunlit by it.

"That is the elixir of Père Gaucher, the joy and health of our Provence," added the worthy man with a triumphant air. "It is made at the convent of the Prémontrés, two leagues from your mill. Isn't it worth all the chartreuse in the world? If you only knew how amusing it is, the history of that elixir! Listen, and I will tell it to you."

Then, very artlessly and without the slightest malice, sitting there in the dining-room of his parsonage, so innocent and so calm, surrounded by the Way of the Cross in little pictures and his white curtains starched like a surplice, the abbé told me the following rather sceptical and irreverent narrative after the style of a tale of Erasmus or d'Assoucy: —

Twenty years ago the Prémontrés, or rather "the White Fathers" as they are called in Provence,

had fallen into great poverty. If you had seen their house in those days you would have grieved over it.

The great wall and the Pacôme tower, were disappearing in fragments. All around the cloister, overgrown with grass, the columns were splitting and the stone saints crumbling in their niches. Not a window left; not a door that closed. Through the yards, in the chapels, the Rhone wind blew as it does in Camargue, extinguishing the tapers, bending the lead of the sashes, driving the water from the holy basins. But, saddest of all, was the steeple of the convent, silent as an empty pigeon-house; and the fathers, for want of money to buy them a bell, were forced to ring for matins with wooden castanets.

Poor White Fathers! I can see them now in the procession of the Fête-Dieu, defiling sadly in their ragged cloaks, pale, thin, fed on pumpkins and water-melons; and behind them Monseigneur the abbot, coming along with his head down, ashamed to show in the sun his tarnished cross and his white woollen mitre, all moth-eaten. The ladies of the Confraternity wept for pity in the ranks, and the portly standard-bearers scoffed among themselves under their breaths as they pointed to those poor monks: —

"Starlings get thin when they live in flocks."

The fact is, the unfortunate White Fathers had themselves begun to ask whether it were not better to break up the community, and each take his flight alone through the world in search of a living.

One day, when this grave question was being discussed by the Chapter, some one entered and announced to the prior that Frère Gaucher asked to be heard before the council. You must know, to guide you, that Frère Gaucher was the cattle-keeper of the convent; that is to say, he spent his days going from arcade to arcade of the cloisters, driving before him two emaciated cows to browse upon the grass in the cracks of the pavement. Brought up till he was twelve years old by an old crazy woman of the region, who was called Tante Bégon, received at that age into the convent, the luckless lad had never learned anything except how to drive his beasts and say his Paternoster; and the latter he said in Provençal, for his brain and his mind were as hard and dull as a leaden dirk. Fervent Christian, however, though a little visionary; living with comfort in a hair shirt, and flagellating himself with robust conviction, and with such an arm!

When he was seen to enter the Chapter room, simple and stolid, bowing to the assembly with his leg behind him, prior, canons and bursar they all began to laugh. That was usually the effect produced, wherever seen, of that good, kind face with its grizzled goat's-beard and its rather crazy eyes. Frère Gaucher himself was unmoved.

"My Reverends," he said in his simple way, twisting his chaplet of olive-stones, "it is a true saying that empty casks hum loudest. Would you believe it, by dint of digging into my poor head, which was hollow enough already, I believe I have

found a way to get us out of our difficulties. This is how: You all knew Tante Bégon, that worthy woman who took care of me when I was young (God rest her soul, the old slut! she used to sing villanous songs when drunk). I have to tell you, my reverend fathers, that Tante Bégon, in her lifetime, knew as much and more, about mountain herbs as a Corsican blackbird; so that in her last days she concocted an incomparable elixir by mixing together five or six species of simples which she and I used to go and gather on the Alpilles. That's many fine years agone; but I think that with the help of Saint Augustine and the permission of our Father-abbot, I may be able, by careful search, to remember the composition of that mysterious elixir. If so, we should need only to put it in bottles and sell it rather dear to enrich the community gently, gently, like our brethren of La Trappe and the Grand — "

He was not allowed to finish. The prior rose and fell upon his neck. The canons grasped his hands. The bursar, more excited than even the others, kissed respectfully the ragged edge of his cassock. Then they all returned to their seats to deliberate; and before the session broke up the Chapter decided to intrust the cows to Frère Thrasybulus, in order to enable Frère Gaucher to give himself wholly to the making of his elixir.

How did the good brother manage to recover the recipe of Tante Bégon? — at the cost of what efforts? what vigils? History saith not. But what

is certain is, that by the end of six months the liqueur of the White Fathers was already very popular. Throughout the Comtat, throughout the whole region of Arles, not a farm, not a granary that did not have in its storeroom, among bottles of boiled wine and jars of pickled olives, a little brown flask, sealed with the arms of Provence, and bearing the effigy on a silver ticket of a monk in ecstasy. Thanks to the vogue of its elixir, the convent of the Prémontrés grew rich very rapidly. The Pacôme tower was rebuilt; the prior had a new mitre, the church certain handsome painted windows; and within the delicate tracery of the steeple a whole company of bells alighted one fine Easter morning, carolling and tintinnabulating in joyful peals.

As for Frère Gaucher, that poor lay brother, whose rusticities had so long enlivened the Chapter, there was no thought of *him* any longer. Henceforth he was known as the Reverend Père Gaucher, man of intellect and great learning, who lived completely apart from the petty and manifold occupations of the cloister, shut up all day in his laboratory, while thirty monks were roaming the hills in search of his odorous simples. This laboratory, into which no one, not even the prior, was allowed to enter, was an old abandoned chapel at the farther end of the canons' garden. The simplicity of the good fathers made something mysterious and formidable out of it; and if, by way of adventure, an occasional little monk, bold and inquisitive, climbed among the vines to the rose-

window of the portal, he slid down very hastily, terrified, on catching sight of Père Gaucher, with a necromantic beard, stooping over his boilers, hydrometer in hand, and, all around him, retorts of rose-marble, gigantic stills, coils of crystal pipe, — a fantastic medley which flamed like witchcraft through the red glare of the painted window.

At close of day, while the last Angelus was ringing, the door of this place of mystery opened discreetly, and the Reverend took his way to the church for evening service. 'T was a sight to see the greeting he received as he crossed the monastery! The brethren lined up in hedges along his way, whispering: —

"Hush! he knows the secret! . . "

The bursar followed and spoke to him with bowed head. In the midst of all this adulation the worthy father advanced, mopping his forehead, his three-cornered shovel hat tipped back around his head like a halo, while he himself looked complacently about him on the great courtyards now full of orange-trees, the blue slate roofs where the new vanes were twirling, and the cloister — dazzlingly white between its elegant and floriated columns — where the canons in their new gowns filed along, two and two with placid faces.

"It is to me that they owe it all!" thought the Reverend, and every time he did so, the thought sent puffs of pride into his heart.

The poor man was well punished for it. You shall see how.

Picture to yourself that one evening after the service had begun, he arrived at the church in a state of extraordinary agitation: red, out of breath, his hood awry, and so bewildered that in taking holy water he soaked his sleeves to the elbow. At first it was thought to be emotion at coming late to church; but when he was seen to bow low to the organ and to the stalls instead of doing reverence to the altar, to rush through the nave like a whirlwind and wander about the choir unable to find his stall, and then, once seated, to bow to right and left, smiling beatifically, a murmur of amazement ran through the aisles. From breviary to breviary the whisper flew: —

"What is the matter with Père Gaucher? What *can* be the matter with our Père Gaucher?"

Twice the prior, much annoyed, dropped the end of his crozier on the pavement to order silence. In the choir the psalms were going on all right, but the responses lacked vigour.

All of a sudden, in the middle of the *Ave verum*, behold Père Gaucher flinging himself back in his stall and singing out in a startling voice: —

> "Dans Paris, il y a un Père Blanc,
> Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban. . ."

General consternation. Every one rose, shouting out: —

"Take him away! he 's possessed of the devil!"

The canons crossed themselves. Monseigneur's crozier rapped furiously. But Père Gaucher saw nothing, heard nothing; and two vigorous monks

were forced to drag him away through the little door of the choir fighting like a maniac and shouting louder than ever his *patatin, taraban.*

The next day, at dawn, the unhappy man was on his knees in the prior's oratory, making his *mea culpa* with torrents of tears.

"'T was the elixir, Monseigneur; the elixir overcame me," he said, striking his breast. And seeing him so heart-broken, so repentant, the good prior himself was much moved.

"Come, come, Père Gaucher, be calm; it will all dry up like dew in the sun. After all, the scandal was not as great as you think. It is true the song was a little — hum! hum! But let us hope the novices did n't understand it. And now, tell me, please, how the thing happened. . . In trying the elixir, was it? You must have had too heavy a hand. . . Yes, yes, I understand. Like Schwartz, inventor of gunpowder, you were the victim of your own invention. But tell me, my good friend, is it really necessary that you should try the elixir on yourself?"

"Unfortunately, Monseigneur, though the gauge will give me the strength and degree of the alcohol, I can't trust anything but my own palate for the taste, the velvet of the thing."

"Ah! very well. . . But listen to me. When you taste the elixir thus, from necessity, does it seem to you nice? Do you take pleasure in tasting it?"

"Alas! yes, Monseigneur," cried the hapless father, turning scarlet. "For the last two nights

it has had an aroma, a bouquet! . . I am certain it is the devil himself who has played me this vile trick. And that's why I am fully determined to use nothing but the gauge henceforth. No matter if the liqueur is not as good. . . "

"That will never do," interrupted the prior eagerly. "We must n't expose ourselves to the discontent of customers. You must be careful, now that you are warned, to be upon your guard. Come, how much do you need for the test? Fifteen, or twenty drops? call it twenty. The devil will be pretty clever to catch you with twenty drops. . . Besides, to avoid all accidents, I exempt you from coming to church any more. You will say the evening service by yourself in the laboratory. . . And now, go in peace, my Reverend, but, above all, — count your drops."

Alas! — in vain did the poor Reverend count his drops; the demon had him fast and would not let him go.

The laboratory heard queer things!

In the daytime all went well. Père Gaucher was calm; he prepared his chafing-dishes, his distillers, sorted his herbs carefully — all of them Provençal herbs, delicate, gray, dentelled, full of fragrance and sunshine. But at night, when the simples were infused, and the elixir was simmering in those great copper basins, the martyrdom of the poor man began.

"Seventeen . . . eighteen . . . nineteen . . . twenty! . ."

The drops fell one by one into the silver-gilt goblet. Those twenty, the Father swallowed at a gulp, almost without any pleasure. It was only the twenty-first which he coveted. Oh! that twenty-first drop! . . To escape temptation he went and knelt at the farther end of the laboratory and buried himself in his paternosters. But the warm liqueur still sent up a little steam laden with aromatic perfumes, which floated around and brought him, *nolens volens*, back to the pans. . . The liqueur was then of a beautiful golden green. . . Stooping over it, with flaring nostrils, Père Gaucher stirred it gently with his blowpipe and in the golden sparkles that rolled in that emerald stream he seemed to see the eyes of Tante Bégon, laughing and snapping out as she looked at him.

"Come, take another drop!"

And from drop to drop, the luckless man ended by filling his goblet to the brim. Then, overcome at last, he let himself fall into a big arm-chair, and there, helpless in body, with eyelids half-closed, he sipped his sin slowly, saying to himself in whispered tones with delicious remorse: —

"Ah! I've damned myself — I'm damned."

The worst of it was that at the bottom of that diabolical elixir he found, by I don't know what witchcraft, all the vile songs of Tante Bégon, and among them, invariably, the famous rondo of the White Fathers: *Patatin, patatan.*

Imagine what confusion the next day when his cell neighbours would say, maliciously: —

"Hey! hey! Père Gaucher, you had grasshop-

P. Avril

pers in your head when you went to bed last night."

Then followed tears, despair, fasts, hair-shirts, and flagellations. But nothing availed against the demon of that elixir. Every evening at the same hour the demoniacal possession was renewed.

During this time, orders rained on the monastery like a benediction. They came from Nîmes, Aix, Avignon, Marseille. Day by day the place assumed, more and more, the air of a manufactory. There were packing brothers, labelling brothers, corresponding brothers, and carting brothers. God's service lost, this way and that, a good many strokes of the bell; but the poor of the region lost nothing at all, I can tell you that.

However, one fine Sunday morning, just as the bursar was reading to the assembled Chapter his account for the end of the year, and while all the good canons were listening with sparkling eyes and smiles upon their lips, Père Gaucher burst in upon the conference, crying out: —

"Enough, enough! I'll do it no more! Give me back my cows."

"What's the matter, Père Gaucher?" asked the prior, who suspected what it was.

"What's the matter, Monseigneur? Why this: that I am on the road to a fine eternity of flames and pitchforks. The matter is that I drink, and drink like a wretch —"

"But I told you to count your drops."

"Count my drops, indeed! It is goblets I count

by now. . . Yes, my Reverends, I 've come to that. . . Three flasks a night. . . You see for yourselves it can't go on. . . Therefore, make the elixir by whom you will. May God's fire burn me if I touch it again."

The Chapter did not laugh this time.

"But, unhappy man, you will ruin us," cried the bursar, flourishing his big book.

"Do you prefer that I should damn myself?"

On that the prior rose.

"My Reverends," he said, extending his handsome white hand on which shone the pastoral ring. "There is a way to arrange all this. . . It is in the evening, is it not, my dear son, that the demon tempts you?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, regularly, every evening. So that now, when evening comes, I have, saving your presence, great sweats, like Capitou's donkey when she sees her load."

"Well, be comforted. In future, every evening at service-time, we will recite on your behalf the orison of Saint Augustine, to which plenary indulgence is attached. With that, whatever happens, you are safe. It is absolution during the sin."

"Oh! if that is so, thank you, Monseigneur."

And without another word Père Gaucher returned to his distillery as gay as a lark.

From that moment, every evening at the end of complines, the officiating priest never failed to say: —

"Let us pray for our poor Père Gaucher, who

is sacrificing his soul for the interests of the community: *Oremus, Domine . . .*"

And while over all the white hoods prostrate in the shadows of the nave Saint Augustine's prayer passed quivering, like a little breeze over snow, on the other side of the convent, behind the glowing windows of the laboratory Père Gaucher could be heard singing at the top of his lungs: —

"Dans Paris il y a un Père Blanc,
Patatin, patatan, taraban, tarabin ;
Dans Paris il y a un Père Blanc
Qui fait danser des moinettes,
Trin, trin, trin, dans un jardin
Qui fait danser des — "

Here the good father stopped, terrified.

"Mercy upon me! suppose my parishioners were to overhear that!"

IN CAMARGUE.

To my friend Timoleon Ambroy.

I.

THE DEPARTURE.

Great excitement at the château. A messenger has just brought a line from the gamekeeper, half in French, half in Provençal, announcing that already three or four flocks of *galéjons* and *charlottines* have passed, and that birds of *prime* were not lacking. From that instant everybody had the fever. One got ready the cartridges, another tried on the leggings. In large baskets, carefully handled on account of the bottles wrapped in straw, provisions were heaped, heaped, as if we were starting for the desert. At last, all was ready. One morning, in a four o'clock dawn, the break drew up before the portico.

In the yards, only half awake, the dogs were leaping with joy and pressing against the railings at sight of the guns. Old Miracle, the dean of the kennels, Ramette, Miraclet, take their places between our legs, and presently we are bowling along the road to Arles, a little dusty and a little barren on this December morning when the pallid verdure

of the olive-trees is scarcely visible, and the crude green of the scarlet oak looks unreal and wintry. The stables are all astir. Risers before dawn are lighting up the windows of the farmhouses; and beneath the arches of the abbey of Montmajour ospreys, still torpid with sleep, flap their wings among the ruins. Already we are meeting old peasant-women trotting slowly to market on their donkeys. They come from Ville-des-Baux. Six full leagues to sit an hour upon the steps of Saint-Trophyme and sell their little bunches of simples gathered on the mountain!

And now here we are at the ramparts of Arles; low crenelated ramparts, such as we see in old engravings where warriors armed with lances appear above battlements that are smaller than they. We crossed at a gallop the marvellous little town, one of the most picturesque in France with its carved and rounded balconies overhanging the roadway almost to the centre of the narrow street, and its old black houses with the little Moorish portals, low and pointed, which carry you back to the days of William Short-Nose and the Saracens.

At this hour no one is in the streets. The quay of the Rhone alone is lively. The steamer that plies to the Camargue is puffing at the foot of the steps, ready to be off. "Men of all work" in jackets of a sort of brown drugget, girls from the Roquette going to hire themselves out on the farms, went on board when we did, laughing and chattering. Under the long, brown, and hooded mantle, drawn close because of the sharp morning

air, the tall Arlesian head-dress gives a small and graceful look to the head, with a touch of pretty sauciness and a desire to toss it, as if to fling the laugh or the jest still farther. . . The bell rings; we start. With the triple speed of the Rhone, the screw, and the mistral the two shores unfold themselves rapidly. On one side is Crau, an arid, stony plain. On the other the Camargue, greener, and continuing to the sea its short grass and its marshes full of reeds.

From time to time the vessel stopped near a wharf, to right or left, "to empire or kingdom," as was said in the middle-ages, in the days of the Kingdom of Arles, and as the old mariners of the Rhone still say. At each wharf, a white farm-house and cluster of trees. The labourers go ashore with their tools, the women, baskets on their arms, pass erect down the gangway. Toward the empire or toward the kingdom, little by little the boat empties; and by the time it arrives at Mas-de-Giraud, where we landed, there was scarcely any one on board.

The Mas-de-Giraud is an old farm-house of the Seigneurs of Barbentane, which we now entered to await the arrival of the gamekeeper, who was to fetch us at that point. In the lofty kitchen, labourers, vineyard-dressers, shepherds were at table; grave, silent, eating slowly and served by women who only ate after them. Soon the keeper appeared with the *carriole*. True type *à la* Fenimore, trapper on earth and water, fishkeeper and gamekeeper, the people of the country round

called him "lou Roudeïroù" [*le rôdeur*, the prowler] because he was always to be seen in the mists of dawn or the twilight hour on watch, hidden among the bushes or else motionless in his little boat, employed in observing his nets on the *clairs* [the ponds] and the *roubines* [canals for irrigation]. It was perhaps this business of perpetual watching that made him so silent, so self-contained. Still, while the little *carriole* loaded with guns and baskets rolled along in front of us, he gave us news of the hunting, the number of passing flocks, and the places where the migratory birds had alighted. As we talked we were advancing deeper into the country.

The cultivated land once passed, we found ourselves in the heart of the wild Camargue. As far as the eye could reach among the pastures, marshes and irrigating streams glittered through the herbage. Bunches of reeds and tamarisks lay like islands on the bosom of a calm sea. No tall trees. The uniform aspect of the vast plain is unbroken. Here and there were cattle-sheds and sheepfolds, stretches of low roofs almost level with the ground. The scattered herds lying on the salty grass, or the flocks pressing closely round the russet cape of the shepherd, did not interrupt the great uniformity, diminished as they were by the infinite space of blue horizons and the open sky. Like the sea, uniform in spite of its waves, the plain conveys a sense of solitude, of immensity, increased by the mistral, which blows without relaxing and without obstacle and by its powerful

breath seems to flatten and so widen the landscape. Everything bends before it. The smallest shrubs keep the imprint of its passage, and continue twisted and bent toward the south in an attitude of flight.

II.

THE HUT.

A ROOF of reeds, walls of reeds, dry and yellow, that is the hut. This is the name we give to our hunting-box. Type of a Camargue house, it has but one room, lofty, vast, and no window, getting its light from a glass door, closed at night with solid shutters. Along the great plastered walls freshly whitewashed, racks await the guns, game-bags, and marsh boots. At the farther end five or six cots are ranged around a real mast planted in the ground and rising to the roof, which it supports. At night, when the mistral blows and the house cracks everywhere, and the wind brings with it the roar of the distant sea, increasing and swelling the sound, one might think one's self lying in the cabin of a boat.

But in the afternoon it is that the hut is charming. On our fine days of Southern winter, I like to be left all alone near the high chimney where a few roots of tamarisk are smouldering. Under the assaults of the mistral or the tramontane, the door bursts in, the reeds cry out, and all these

little shocks are a mere echo of the great agitations of Nature going on around me. The winter sun lashed by the wind scatters itself, joins its beams, and again disperses. Great shadows flit beneath a glorious blue sky. Light comes in jerks, noises also, and the bells of the flocks heard suddenly, then forgotten, lost in the wind, return to sing at the shaken door with the charm of a chorus. The exquisite moment is the twilight hour, just before the hunters come back. Then the wind calms down. I go out for an instant. In peace the great red sun descends, flaming, yet without heat. The night falls; it brushes me in passing with its damp black wing. Over there, at the level of the soil, the flash of a gun runs along with the light of a ruddy star, brightened by the environing darkness. For the rest of the day, life hastens. A long triangle of ducks fly low, as if they meant to take to earth, but the hut, where the lantern is now lighted, keeps them away. He who heads the column draws in his neck and mounts, while others behind him utter savage and angry cries.

Presently an immense pattering is heard like a noise of rain. Thousands of sheep, called in by the shepherd, and driven by the dogs whose confused gallop and panting breath can be heard, are hurrying to the fold, timid and undisciplined. I am invaded, brushed against, surrounded by this cloud of curly wool, all bleating; a perfect mob, in which the shepherds and their shadows seem borne along in a bounding flood. Behind the flock come

well known voices, joyous voices. The hut becomes animated, noisy. The roots flame. They laugh the most who are most weary. It is a laughter of happy fatigue, guns in the corner, the great boots flung away pell-mell, the gamebags emptied, and close beside them, plumages, red, golden, green, silvery, all stained with blood. The table is laid, and in the fumes of a good eel-soup silence reigns; the silence of robust appetites, interrupted only by the ferocious growls of the dogs lapping their porringers before the door.

The evening will be short. Already no one is left but the keeper and myself beside the fire, and that is blinking. We talk, or rather, we toss to each other, now and then, the half-words that characterize the peasantry, interjections almost Indian, short and quickly extinct, like the sparkles of the now consumed roots. At last the keeper rises, lights his lantern, and I hear his heavy step going out into the darkness.

III.

A L'ESPÈRE! (ON THE WATCH.)

L'ESPÈRE! — hope! — what a pretty name by which to describe the watch, the expectation of the ambushed huntsman and those undecided hours when everything waits, *hopes*, hesitates between day and night. The watch of the morning a little before sunrise, the watch of the evening in the

twilight! It is the latter that I prefer, especially in this marshy region, where the ponds hold the light so long.

Sometimes the watch is kept in the *negochin*, a very small boat, narrow, without keel, and rolling at the slightest motion. Sheltered by the reeds, the sportsman watches for the ducks lying in his boat, above which nothing is seen but the visor of a cap, the muzzle of a gun, and the head of a dog snuffing the wind, snapping at the gnats, or else, with his big paws extended, hanging over the side of the boat and filling it with water. That watch is too complicated for my inexperience. So I usually go to the *espère* on foot, paddling through the marsh in those enormous boots that are cut from the whole length of the leather. I walk slowly, cautiously, for fear of being sucked in. I push through the reeds full of briny odours where the frogs are hopping.

At last here 's an island of tamarisks, a spot of dry earth, where I install myself. The keeper, to do me honour, leaves me his dog, a huge dog of the Pyrenees with a great white coat, hunter and fisher of the highest order, whose presence does not fail to intimidate me slightly. When a waterfowl passes within aim of my gun he has a certain sarcastic way of looking at me; throwing back, with an artist's toss of the head, the long, limp ears that overhang his eyes; then he poses to a point with a quivering motion of his tail and a whole pantomime of impatience, which says to me, "Fire! Come, fire!" I fire and miss. Then,

lying down at full length, he yawns and stretches with a weary, discouraged, and insolent air.

Well, yes! I admit that I am a bad sportsman. The watch, for me, means the falling day, the fading light taking refuge in the water, in the ponds that gleam, polishing to silvery tones the gray tints of a sombre sky. I love that smell of water, the mysterious rustle of insects in the reeds, the little murmur of the long leaves waving. From time to time a sad note passes, rolling through the sky like the rumbling sounds in a sea-shell. It is the bittern, plunging into the water his immense, fisher-bird's beak and snorting — rrrououou! Flocks of cranes file above my head. I hear the rustle of wings, the ruffling of down in the clear air; then nothing. It is night, profound darkness, except for a gleam still lingering on the water.

Suddenly I am conscious of a quiver, a sort of nervous sensation, as if some one were behind me. I turn, and see the companion of beautiful nights, the moon, a large moon, quite round, rising gently with an ascending motion, at first very perceptible, then apparently diminishing as she leaves the horizon.

Already the first ray is distinct beside me, and another is a little farther off. . . . Presently the whole swamp is illuminated. The smallest tuft of grass casts its shadow. The watch is over, the birds see us; we return. We walk in the midst of an inundation, a dust, of vaporous blue light, and every step in the pools and the marches scatters the stars and the moon-rays which lie in the water to its depths.

IV.

THE RED AND THE WHITE.

CLOSE to us, within gunshot of the hut is another hut which resembles ours, but is more rustic. It is there that the gamekeeper lives with his wife and elder children. The daughter attends to the feeding of the men and mends the fishing-nets; the son helps his father to take up the seines and watch the sluices of the ponds. The two younger children are at Arles with their grandmother, and there they will stay till they have learned to read and have made their *bon jour* [good day, first communion]; for here their parents are too far from church and school, and besides, the air of the Camargue would not be good for the little ones. The fact is that in summer, when the marshes dry up and the white clay of the pools cracks in the great heat, the island is scarcely habitable.

I saw that once in the month of August when I came to shoot young wild-duck; and I shall never forget the sad, ferocious aspect of the burnt-up landscape. From place to place the empty ponds smoked in the sun like monstrous vats, keeping low at their bottom a remainder of water, of life, which stirred with a crawling swarm of salamanders, spiders, and water-beetles seeking for damp spots. At the keeper's house all were shivering,

each had the fever; and it was really piteous to see those drawn, yellow faces, the black-circled eyes of those poor unfortunates, compelled to drag themselves about for three months under an inexorable sun which burned the sufferers but did not warm them. Dreary and painful life is that of a gamekeeper in Camargue! This one at least had his wife and children with him; but two leagues farther on, in a marsh, lives a horse-keeper, absolutely alone from one end of the year to the other — a Robinson-Crusoe existence. In his hut of reeds, which he built himself, there is not a utensil he did not make, from the braided osier hammock, the fireplace of three stones, the roots of tamarisk cut into stools, to even the lock and key of white wood which close this singular habitation.

The man is as strange as his dwelling. He is a species of philosopher, silent as a hermit, sheltering his peasant distrust of every one behind his bushy eyebrows. When he is not in the pastures you will find him seated before his door, deciphering slowly, with childish and touching application, one of those little pink, blue, or yellow pamphlets which wrap the pharmaceutical phials he procures for his horses. Though the huts are near together, our keeper and he never visit each other. They even avoid meeting. One day I asked the *roudeïroù* the reason of this antipathy. He answered gravely: "On account of opinions: he is red; I am white."

So in this desert, where solitude might have brought them together, these two savages, both

ignorant, both naïve, these two herdsmen of Theocritus, who go to the city scarcely once a year, and to whom the little cafés of Arles, with their mirrors and their gilding, are as dazzling as the palace of the Ptolemies, have found means to hate each other on account of their political convictions.

V.

THE VACCARÈS.

THE finest thing in the Camargue is the Vaccarès. Often, abandoning the hunt, I go and sit on the shore of that salt lake, a little sea like a bit of the ocean captured and shut in by earth and content with its captivity. In place of the dryness, the aridity that casts sadness everywhere, the Vaccarès, with its rather high banks, green with a velvety fine grass, exhibits an original and charming flora, centaureas, water-trefoil, gentians, and the pretty *saladelle*, blue in winter, red in summer, which changes colour with change of atmosphere, and in its ceaseless blooming marks the seasons with diverse tints.

Towards five in the afternoon, as the sun declines, these three leagues of water, without a boat, without a sail to limit them, transform their extent and take on a charming aspect. It is no longer the charm of the pools and the ponds appearing now and then in a dip of the marly soil, beneath which one feels the water percolating. Here the

impression is broad and fine. From afar this radiance of water allures great flocks of divers, bitterns, herons, flamingoes with white bosoms and rose-coloured wings, all standing in line to fish along the shore in a manner that exhibits their various tints in a long even strip. Also the ibis, the true Egyptian ibis, who feel themselves much at home in the silent landscape beneath that splendid sun. From the place where I lay I could hear nothing but the water rippling and the voice of the keeper, calling to his scattered horses on the brink. They all had resounding names: "Cifer! (Lucifer) Estello! Estournello!" Each animal, hearing itself called, came galloping up, mane streaming, to eat his oats from the hand of the keeper.

Farther on, still on the same shore, was a vast herd of cattle peacefully feeding like the horses. Now and then I could see above the clumps of tamarisk the line of their bent backs and their small horns as they raised their heads. Most of these oxen of the Camargue are raised to run in the *ferrades*, the village fêtes, and some have names that are even celebrated in the circuses of Provence and Languedoc. Our neighbouring herd counts among others the "Roman" who has ripped up I know not how many men and horses in the races at Nismes, Arles, Tarascon. Consequently, his comrades have accepted him as leader. For in these strange herds, the animals govern themselves by laws, grouped around some old bull whom they take for leader. When a hurricane falls upon Camargue, terrible in that great plain

where nothing diverts it, it is a sight to see the herd pressing together behind its leader, all heads turning to the wind their broad foreheads where the strength of the ox is concentrated. The Provençal herdsmen call that manœuvre *vira la bano au giscle* — turning horn to the wind; and sorrow to the herd that does not do so. Blinded by rain, driven by wind, the routed herd turns upon itself, is terrified, dispersed, and the distracted animals, rushing before them to escape the tempest, plunge into the Rhone, the Vaccarès, or the sea.

BARRACK HOMESICKNESS.

THIS morning, at the first gleam of dawn, the loud roll of a drum awoke me with a start: Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

A drum among my pines at such an hour! Singular, to say the least of it.

Quick, quick, I jumped out of bed, and ran to open the door.

No one. The noise has stopped. From among the wet creepers two or three curlews fly out, shaking their wings. A slight breeze sings in the leafage. To eastward, on the delicate summit of the Alpilles lies a golden dust from which the sun is slowly issuing. A first ray touches already the roof of the mill. At that instant the drum, invisible, begins to beat again in the covert: Ron — plon — plon, plon, plon!

The devil take that ass's skin! I had forgotten it. But who can the savage be who salutes Aurora in these woodland wilds with a drum? In vain I looked about me; I saw nothing — nothing but tufts of lavender and pine-trees racing downward to the road. In that thicket there must be some imp, engaged in making fun of me — Ariel, no doubt, or Master Puck. The scamp has said to himself as he passed my mill: —

"That Parisian is too tranquil here. I 'll give him a serenade."

On which he takes a big drum, and — Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon! Will you be quiet, you rascal of a Puck? you 'll wake my grasshoppers.

It was not Puck.

It was Gouguet François, called Pistolet, drummer of the 31st infantry, off on a fortnight's furlough. Pistolet is bored in the country; he is homesick, that drummer, and when the village is willing to lend him its drum, he goes off to the woods in melancholy mood to beat it and dream of his barracks.

It was on my little green hill that he had come to dream on this occasion. There he stands against a fir-tree, his drum between his legs, rejoicing his heart. Coveys of startled partridges rise at his feet without his seeing them. The wild thyme is balmy about him, but he does not smell it.

Neither does he notice those delicate spider-webs trembling in the sunshine among the branches, nor the spicy pine-needles that skip on his drum. Absorbed in his dream and his music, he lovingly watches his sticks as they tap, and his big, silly face expands with delight at each loud roll.

Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

"How fine it is, our big barrack, with its paved courtyard, its rows of windows, all in a line, the men in their forage-caps, and the low arcades where the canteens rattle!"

Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

"Oh! that echoing staircase, the white-washed corridors, the close dormitory, the belts that one pipe-clays, the blacking-pots, the iron bedsteads with their gray coverlets, the guns that glitter in the rack!"

Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

"Oh! the good days in the guard-house, the cards that stick to one's fingers, that hideous queen of spades with feather furbelows, and the old tattered Pigault-Lebruns lying round on the camp beds."

Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

"Oh! the long nights mounting guard at the gates of the ministries, the chinks in the sentry-box which let in the rain, the feet that are always cold, and the fine gala coaches that spatter you as they go by. Oh! that extra duty, the days in the stocks, the vile-smelling bucket, the wooden pillow, the cold reveille of a rainy morning, and the taps of a foggy night, when the gas is lighted and the roll-call brings every one in all breathless!"

Ron plon plon! Ron plon plon!

"Oh! the forest of Vincennes, the white cotton gloves, the walks on the ramparts. Oh! the Barrière de l'École, the soldier's girl, the cornet in the Salon de Mars, the absinthe in the garden, the secrets between two hiccoughs, the sabres unsheathed, the sentimental song — sung with a hand on one's heart!"

Dream, dream, poor man; it is not I who will prevent you; tap your drum boldly, tap hard with

all your might. I have no right to think you ridiculous.

If you are homesick for your barrack, have not I, I myself, a longing for mine?

My Paris pursues me even here—like yours. You drum beneath the pines and I make copy.—Fine Provençals we are, i' faith! Down there, in the barracks of Paris we regret our blue Alpilles and the fresh wild odour of lavender; but here, in the heart of Provence we miss our barracks, and all that recalls them to us is precious.

Eight o'clock is striking in the village. Pistolet, not relinquishing his drumsticks, starts to go back. I hear him, descending through the pines, still drumming. And I, lying on the grass, sick with nostalgia, I fancy I see, to the sound of the drum as it recedes, my Paris, the whole of my Paris defiling among the firs.

Ah Paris! . . Paris! . . Forever Paris!

LETTERS TO AN ABSENT ONE.

LETTERS TO AN ABSENT ONE.

THE SURRENDER.

Written Feb. 6, 1871.

I DO not know what bravura air they will sing to you in the theatre at Bordeaux apropos of the siege and the surrender of Paris; but if you want to know, once for all, my sentiments on that lamentable affair, here they are in two words: —

Our valiant generals — may the devil take them! — defended the ex-capital just as they might have defended Mézières, Toul, or Verdun, after a certain military code which on leaving school each one carries under the lining of his képi: "Article I. A besieged city never unbesieges itself." Yet they parted from that precept and attempted to raise the siege.

Remark in passing that these same tacticians, eight days before the siege, told us with adorable self-sufficiency that we might be carried by assault, but never invested — never.

Oh yes! generals of the Good God, we *could* be invested. The Prussians have broad paws, and although Paris has a big waist she found herself, in less than a week, pinched in like a wasp by those

old veterans; but if you generals had had the pluck we might even then have got out of the difficulty. Paris is a giant; and you ought to have let her fight as a giant; you ought to have given freedom to her genius and put in motion all her muscles. When the Marne hampered you, Paris should have swallowed the Marne. Those terrible heights of Châtillon, Meudon, Champigny, all those mills, all those knolls, the ridiculous and bloody names of which pursue us in our dreams, Paris, with one kick, could have sent them to the moon. It was a matter of four hundred thousand spades working for a month behind a hundred thousand muskets; but you would not hear of it.

Ah! the true history of that siege, it is not in newspapers or in books that we must look for it; we should go to the ministry of war. *There* were fought the great battles before Paris. *There* were wrecked against the leathern bucklers of military bureaucracy all individual efforts, all good wills, all ardent enthusiasms, all great ideas for the defence of the city. It was pitiful to see Minister Dorian and his staff of the Public Works so active, so intelligent, going from bureau to bureau, making himself humble, even small, and supplicating, with clasped hands: —

"For pity's sake, gentlemen of the War Department! We know how insignificant we are; the cleverest of us cannot serve to even brush your Guiods and your Frébaults. Yes, you are right, our engineers are asses, our contractors under-

stand nothing; but never mind that, — do try our little pieces of 7 loaded at the breech, and our flying supply-waggons, which can pour hogsheads of hot coffee and wine down your soldiers' throats even on the battlefield, and our stationary balloons which, without costing you the life of a single man, can reconnoitre and make sure whether the batteries on the Châtillon are really only stove-pipes, as it is said they are."

And how proud they were, those brave Public Works men, when, after five months of entreaty, efforts, and documents of all kinds, they succeeded in getting to the front a few of those "pieces of 7" — about which one of our great generals said in his slightly cracked faubourg voice: —

"Not so bad, this commercial artillery! I really must see about buying some."

Too late, general. The Prussians have got them all.

Now, the end is come. Paris has once more eaten white bread and butter. There is no going back to the past. At first I raged, — my God! how I raged, — but of late, I feel within me, in the depths of me, something relaxed, something restful. It was so long, my dear friend, so long, that siege! so agonizing, so monotonous! It seems to me as if I had just spent five months at sea in a dead and almost continual calm.

And to think that for certain persons those five months of enervating sadness were intoxicating — a perpetual fête. From the privates of the National Guard, earning their forty-five sous a day for doing

nothing, to the majors with seven stripes, constructors of barricades in chambers, ambulance fellows of Gamache, all shiny with good meat juice, fantastic free-lances parading in cafés and calling the waiters with omnibus whistles, commanders of the National Guard billeted with their mistresses in the public apartments, all the hucksters, all the tricksters, the dog-stealers, the cat-hunters, the sellers of horse-hoofs, albumen, gelatine, the pigeon-raisers, the owners of milch cows, all those having notes in the sheriff's hands and those who dislike to pay their rent, — to every one of them the end of the siege is desolation; there is not a patriotic thought among them. Paris free, they were forced to return to the ranks, to work, to face life, to give up the gold lace, the public apartments, and return to their kennels, — ah! it was hard.

Certainly I do not wish to calumniate the Republic. In the first place, I do not yet know what it is; then, having seen very closely the men and the things of the empire, I have no right to cavil. Nevertheless, what has been going on around me since the fourth of September has filled my soul with bitterness, and made me more sceptical than ever. All those that I knew to be fools, loafers, idlers, incapables have come to the surface and found offices. Be it understood that I am not speaking of republicans by conviction, faithful men, men of the night before; they have had their turn, and it was just; but I speak of the others, those whom that sad empire would not have had in its lowest offices, — they are provided for now, — even to

that miserable, that pitiable N. . . whom we saw during the death-struggle of the late reign begging from all the ministries an office, no matter what; here he is now commissary of police in a blood-thirsty arrondissement.

Another strange thing is to see —in the midst of the great political hurly-burly — the immutability of certain men and certain situations. The most complete type of these *hommes-bouées* — human buoys, who float in all weathers and come to the surface of the water no matter what may happen — is the worthy secretary-general of the ci-devant legislative body. All the journalists of Paris know this long individual with the livid face, thin lips, sad smile, head of an acrobat and a beadle, who is always to be seen seated at a little table, above the tribune and behind the presidential chair. I like to think that the place is a good one, for it is now more than thirty years that the worthy man has clung to it; it would need a bold wind-sweep to topple him from that height. Kings have gone, empires have crumbled, the torpedoes of the republic have blown the Assembly to bits, but the little table of M. Valette has not budged, and never will budge.

Talk to me of in-dis-pen-sa-ble men! He is one; or at least he makes us believe he is, and that is why he is so strong. It seems that no one in France, not even M. Thiers, knows parliamentary law as he does. So that if he were not here the parliamentary machine would be unable to perform its functions. Outside of those terrible rules and

regulations, as to which he is pitiless, he is a man all suppleness and all concession. "If your Excellency desires it," he says in a sugary voice, bowing to the ground before M. Palikao. This was said on September 4, at midday. September 6, at the same hour, he entered the salons of the Place Beauvau and, with the same obsequious smile, the same bend of his courtier hips, he said to M. Gambetta: "If your Excellency will kindly permit me." And this time — as ever before — they have left him tranquil at his little table, with the keys of the Palais in his pocket, a picket of the National Guard before his door to do him honour; and for the last five months he has had nothing to do but to pick violets on the beautiful lawns of the presidency and draw his pay regularly. Now that the Chamber has opened at Bordeaux he is down there, smiling as usual, at his little table behind the presidential arm-chair.

A saying of this amiable personage will complete his portrait. One of his subordinates attempted on some occasion to oppose him, openly relying on the protection of M. Schneider, then president of the legislative body. M. Valette summoned the poor devil into his cabinet, and there, gently and without anger, he slipped into him between skin and flesh, as they say, this memorable remark:—

"Take care what you are about, my friend; presidents are not eternal."

M. Valette *is* eternal.

He is called "The Administration."

THE DICTATORS.

Do you remember No. 7 rue de Tournon and that famous Hôtel du Sénat where we have eaten so many Reims biscuits in the dust? I passed before it this morning on my way to look at the bombarded quarter. The house is still the same; the courtyard as black and damp, the great windows of the dining-room as cloudy as they were a dozen years ago, but the room itself seemed to me less noisy.

What a racket was there — in our day — at dinner-time! Always a dozen Southern students — of the worst South — with rusty beards too black, too shiny, shrill tones, extravagant gestures, and long, drooping noses which gave them the look of a horse's head. Heavens! how insufferable those young Gascons were! What excitement out of nothing, what silliness, what assurance, what turbulence! One of them especially, the loudest bawler, the most gesticulating of the band, remains, more particularly, in my memory. I can see him now as he entered the room, round-backed, rolling his shoulders, blind of one eye, and his face all inflamed.

As soon as he entered, the other horse-heads sprang up around the table and greeted him with a formidable neigh: —

"Ha! ha! ha! here's Gambetta!"

They pronounced it, the monsters! *Ghambetthâh*, and a mouthful it was!

He, sitting noisily down, spread himself over the table, or threw himself back in his chair, perorated, rapped with his fist, laughed till the windows shook, dragged the table-cloth about him, spat to a distance, got drunk without drinking, snatched the dishes from your hands, the words from your mouth, and, after having talked the whole time, went away without having said a single thing; Gaudissart and Gazonal in one; that is to say, all that can be imagined most provincial, most sonorous, and most tiresome. I remember that once I invited to our table a little employé of the city, a cold lad, very self-contained, who had just made his début in the Charivari, signing the name of Henri Rochefort to theatre articles in a prose as sober and reserved as his own person. Gambetta, to do honour to the journalist, seated him on his right, the side of his sound eye, and soaked him all the evening with his eloquence, so well and so long that the future chairman of the Committee on Barricades, carried away from my dinner a stupendous headache which cut short our relations. Since then I have greatly regretted him.

You see, my dear absent friend, how mistaken we can be about men. How many times did we say that that flower of the Tarn-et-Garonne would return to his own region and flatten himself day by day between the heavy folios of a provincial code in the neighbourhood of Auch or Pézenas,

We never once suspected then that we had before us a great orator in the germ, a deputy, a minister, a dictator; and that from that disorderly brain, that flux of language, thick and muddy as the waters of a pool, would one day gush a word of power which seemed to some the very breath itself of the Nation.

How came it so? By what mysterious operation did this Tholomyès of the *table d'hôte* turn into a great man so suddenly? I have my own idea about it; but it is a poetical idea, and you will laugh when I tell it to you. Nevertheless, nothing can be more real. It came from the day when he acquired a glass eye, a beautiful blue eye, with an inalterable iris — from that day dates the metamorphosis and the high destiny of Gambetta. That glass eye was probably a fairy; and in bringing light to the cyclops face she gave him, by the same stroke of her wand, intellect, power of expression, the gift of command, and, above all, the gift of malice. For he is malicious, that Gascon! No other proof is needed than that galloping consumption about which he made us all so pitiful last year, and which will certainly take its place in history, a little lower than the crutches of Sixtus V. in the storehouse of the properties and artifices of great men.

But what his glass eye never could relieve him of were his terrible Southern accent and his epileptic gesticulation. In those respects he was always the former Gambetta of the rue de Tournon; and persons who knew him well were able, without

leaving Paris, to follow him, step by step, in his provincial heroics. We could see him thumping his fist on the balcony of prefectures and casting to the astounded echoes of the market-places or the great squares a formidable and roaring: "Citoyeïns!" Also we could imagine him inspecting a camp of Mobiles, or heading a patriotic funeral, head down, back rounded, gait rolling, a red foulard knotted crookedly round his throat, and his right arm flung carelessly on the shoulder of one of his Mamelukes, — Spuller, Pipe-en-Bois, or Chose.

Just think! if one had the heart to laugh, what a jolly vaudeville one might make with that title: "The Mamelukes of Gambetta." What airs and bedizenment they gave themselves, all those ninnies, those obscurities, those incapables, whom that glass eye dragged for one moment out of their native dusk! What junketings! what fêtes! and how hard it must have been to renounce it all. It should, in justice, be said that the business of mameluke had, at times, a cruel side. I remember seeing, some four or five months ago, the head of the cabinet, Spuller, in a terrible position. It was on the Place Saint-Pierre at Montmartre, one windy afternoon under a broiling sun. In the middle of the square, Nadar, wearing his aëronaut's helmet, was flaming away. In a corner, the enormous yellow balloon, lying on its side, was slowly inflating. All around, stood an immense crowd come to see the minister of the Interior mount up into the sky with the head of his cabinet. In the dis-

tance, a dull but incessant cannonading was heard.

I don't know why it was, but that vast blue sky, the yellow balloon, that Delegate of the Defence about to fly upward like a bird, the giant city with its many quarters in which the thunder of the siege guns was lost among the myriad street noises — all these things had something fantastic and Chinese about them which made me think vaguely of the siege of Pekin. To complete the illusion, the worthy M. Spuller, in a long furred coat, opened wide his eyes like circumflex accents and gazed with horror at the preparations for this unusual departure — the vast sky, Paris below it in a fog, and the great yellow creature swelling up to sight and dragging at its ropes. The poor mameluke was piteous to behold. He was pale, his teeth chattered. Once or twice I heard him say, quite low, in a daft voice: —

"It is, truly, a most extraordinary thing."

Most extraordinary, indeed, Monsieur Spuller.

A MUSHROOM BED OF GREAT MEN.

ABOUT the year LXVII. of the republican hegira, in the middle of the month floréal, when the trees of the boulevard Montmartre were beginning to tint with green, the citizen Carjat, amiable poet and photographer, and behind him a whole covey of young lyricals, thinking that the absinthe of the Café des Variétés tasted of straw, crossed the roadway with a dignified step and hung up their lyres and their hats on the hooks of the opposite café. It was thus, that the great future destiny of the Café de Madrid began.

Up to that time it was only a large, rather melancholy tavern, with faded divans and clouded mirrors, where one found old numbers of "Iberia" lying about, and a few Spaniards, gilt and wrinkled as Cordova leather, drinking chocolate *bavaroise* silently. The noisy invasion of the lyric poets dispersed these hidalgos, but the tavern-keeper lost nothing. That machine for shaking hands called Carjat, once installed near the café window, harpooned the passers in the streets, and, thanks to his adroit and continual fishing, the Café de Madrid became in a very short time the fashionable literary drinking-place; something like the divan Lepelletier, but more mixed, more lively — the little bourse of the Beaux-Arts.

A newspaper in process of being founded, a book about to appear, the opening of the Salon, an exhibition at Martinet's, now and then an exchange of slaps between two lyricals, a little duel on the Île Saint-Ouen with effusion of sour wine, these were, in those days, the great events of the place. As for politics, they were little thought of. And yet, the fine flower of the Commune was there, expanding on the benches; but who the devil would have thought it? All those young fellows seemed so little cut out for dictators, and they were still so far from thinking of it themselves.

Vallès, his nose in his absinthe, joked, sneered, spied on others from the corner of his eye, and watched the café, seeking types for his book on "Refractories." He had talent, that Vallès, before the Commune; but a talent without suppleness, without imagination; very limited as to dictionary; the words "flags, rags, bayonets," recurring continually and merely to give a false ring to his sentences. But with it all, a very individual way of seeing and saying things, a certain joyous ferocity, wit that was wholly his own, and a sufficiency of literature. In those lugubrious tales to which he devoted himself we could guess the bitter laugh, the eyes suffused with bile, of a man whose childhood was wretched, and who hates humanity because, when he was young, he was forced to wear ridiculous garments made from his father's old overcoats.

Beside Vallès, the big painter Courbet, conventional peasant, puffy with pride and beer,

laughed in his beard and shook his fat, saying evil of *Rophoel.*

Farther on, a tall thin fellow in spectacles, with the curled and silly head of a lawyer's clerk and a look as if he had just come from Fortunio's office, was going about from table to table distributing copies of his first book, — "Desperanza" by Vermorel, a work with a philosophic purpose, written in the groves of Bullier with the sentimentality of the Latin quarter. As literary promise it was scarcely worth more than the novels of Paschal Grousset.

The latter often came to the Café de Madrid. A pretty little gentleman, gloved, pomatumed, and curled with tongs, having, both for speech and writing, that deplorable gift which is called facility, and with it a craving to make the world turn on that curious given name of his — Paschal. Poor Villemessant, who was always open to the seductions of dress, and who, in his last years especially, looked less to the talent of his writers than to the tying of their cravats, was charmed with this perfumed Corsican. Novels, items, science for a sou, Don Pasquale did them all for the "Figaro," and as many as he pleased. But inasmuch as what he specially desired to do was to make a noise, and his literature made none, he ended by getting tired of it and went over, as they said at Madrid, to the table of the Politicals.

Here 's what that famous table was. It happened that one day the machine called Carjat, swinging his great arms in the café window, caught on the

fly a young law-student, named Gambetta, already celebrated in all the plum-shops of the boulevard Saint-Michel — the law-students and licentiates go there in flocks like starlings. Behind Gambetta was Laurier, then *Mossieu* Floquet, then Spuller, then Lannes, then Isambert, all of them great politicians, and consumers of beer. These gentlemen, on arriving, took possession of a corner of the café and never left it until the revolution of September 4. It was there, on that "table of the Politicals," a noisy, gesticulating table, that Gambetta's fist exercised itself for five years in parliamentary pugilism; the marble is still there, split like the rock of Roland.

Later, at the farther end of the café, was formed what was called "the corner of the Pure." There, among a group of old sachems with long beards, solemn and dogmatic ventriloquists, snorted Père Delescluze, nervous and high-strung as an Arab steed. With his cameo profile, his feverish gesture, his fanatical blue eyes — eyes so young beneath those white eyebrows — he reminded me of a certain commander of the regulars of Abd-el-Kader, whom I had formerly known in Algeria, whom the Arabs venerated as a saint because he had made, I don't know how many times, the journey to Mecca.

Père Delescluze had never been to Mecca, but he had returned from Cayenne, and among his own party that counted to him for quite as much. He was the Hadji of the democracy. There were men in the departments who had travelled two

hundred leagues merely to look at him and lay their hand upon the skirt of his coat.

That fact gave us at times very delectable comedies. One day I saw a man from Narbon, familiar and hail-fellow-well-met as they are down there, lead up to the table of the saint a whole delegation of Narbonese. Never shall I forget that presentation.

The man from Narbon, proud of his Delescluze, tapped him on the back, leaned upon his shoulder, hooked him by the buttonhole, and called him from one end of the café to the other: *Delescluzès!* winking to his compatriots as if to say "Hein! you see how I speak to him." During this time the worthy Narbonese gazed at the saint with humid eyes, sighing, raising their arms to heaven, and giving way to all sorts of naïve and exaggerated expansions, like the savage Friday when he found his old father at the bottom of the boat. The saint, who is a clever man, did not know where to poke himself, and seemed much displeased. Near him, a little man with a gray tuft of beard under his chin, the head of a kind goat, and light-coloured humourous eyes, smiled with a touched air as he drank his absinthe. This was that brave Razoua, a former spahi, who flung himself into politics to please Révillon, and never doubted that some day he should be deputy of Paris and director of the École Militaire.

Little by little, however, without any one taking notice of it, the physiognomy of the café was

transformed. Of the men of letters of the first period, some, like Banville, Babou, Monselet, had fled, frightened away by the stupid racket; others were dead, such as Baudelaire, Delvau, and Charles Bataille. Some, like Castagnary and Carjat himself, had gone over to Gambetta. Politics had evidently seized upon all the tables.

But worst of all was when Rochefort founded "The Marseillaise." Then a cloud rained down upon us of students, old and pretentious, improvised journalists, without wit, without spelling, as ignorant of Paris as Patagonians, children with beards, who thought themselves called upon to regenerate the world, pedants of republicanism, all wearing waistcoats *à la* Robespierre, cravats *à la* Saint-Just, — the Raoul Rigaults, the Tridons, the youth of Schools who had no youth and no scholarship, did not love to laugh, and were sulky and savage; celebrities of Belleville, such as the famous planner of the club of things, pawn-heads, greasy collars, greasy hair; and all the cracked-brains, the trainers of snails, the saviours of the people, all the discontented, all the good-for-nothings, all the idlers, the incapables —

And to think that those are the men who for a year past have guided France! To think that from the coarsest to the silliest there was not one frequenter of the Café de Madrid who has not been something — dictator, minister, deputy, general, commissary of police, inspector of camps, colonel of the National Guard! And how luck has favoured them! A few, it is true, got nothing

after September 4; but March 18 repaired that injustice. That time nothing was allowed to go begging. They are all members of the Commune now, even that poor devil of an Andrieux, a chiromanician with a corroded face, who used to wander timidly behind our chairs, begging for our hands and calling us "dear master."

The place may truly be termed an historical café. If the revolution triumphs it is on the tables of the Café de Madrid that the new laws will be written.

ROCHEFORT AND ROSSIGNOL.

THE Rochefort whom I knew on my arrival in Paris was a worthy youth of rather melancholy temperament, living modestly with his father on a fourth floor of the rue des Deux-Boules, and using himself very hard to earn the bread of the household. A petty employment at the Hôtel de Ville, a few articles in the *Charivari* paid for at six farthings a line (which, to tell the truth, were not worth more), from time to time a "curtain-raiser" for Plunkett or Cogniard — these were the makings of a gray and tranquil half-life, which resembled his writings, but did not go with that very eccentric countenance, those thin and peevish lips, that great worn brow, and a head always aching, pale, tortured, nervous, which formed at that time his only originality.

What I liked in that Rochefort was a certain bravado of demeanour, a very keen taste for poesy, for pictures, and especially for that *science* of Paris, that boulevard experience which he had even then in the highest degree as the son of a vaudevillist, brought up at Charlemagne and the Café du Cirque. With that exception, there was nothing marked about him: cleverness without excess, regularity in his work, the manners and

ways of a clerk, and no other ambition than to see his name often on the posters in company with that of Clairville or Siraudin. Such was the Henri Rochefort of 1860. The other, the Rochefort of the *Lanterne*, came later, and it is to Rossignol that we owe him.

This Rossignol was a clerk of the city whom one met everywhere, — at first representations, at funerals; who was always asking, with an anxious air, "Have you seen Rochefort?" and who spent his life in following him, missing him, awaiting him, fetching him his cabs, carrying his copy to the papers, repeating his sayings, imitating his gestures; and who finally ended by cutting out of Rochefort's shadow a species of personality of his own. The type is rather frequent on the boulevard. All men who become a little known drag Rossignols after them. Such individuals, who hold an intermediate place between servants and confidants, need an equable temper, the instincts of a hanger-on, and some means; for the business is all-absorbing and ill-rewarded, and sometimes requires outlay. It so chanced that Rochefort's Rossignol had, over and above these necessary qualifications for his part, a certain originality of his own.

He was a great Panurge with long flat hair, a singular mixture of artlessness and cynicism, of timidity and impudence, stupidity and satire, youth and decrepitude — twenty-two years old and the whims of an old man, a cane with an ivory handle and a snuff-box. The most silent and gloomy of beings, and then, suddenly, an excess

of wild gayety, cold excitement, outrageous jests *à la* Bache; insulting persons in the streets without motive, simply for the pleasure of gabbling; foaming, saying everything, either droll or indecent, that came into his head, with the gestures of an epileptic, the eyes of a Pierrot, and the sad laugh, the prolonged laugh, of emaciated men.

I still ask myself how this demoniac ever penetrated into the peaceful life and intimacy of Rochefort. Certain it is that they were never apart. When Rossignol committed follies Rochefort was there to repair them; he fetched him from the guard-house, took him back to his parents, stuffed him with theatre tickets, walked about with him on the boulevard — which made my Rossignol very proud, and gave him early a taste for celebrity. One fine day he too wanted to write, or, at any rate to see his name in a newspaper. Rossignol, a man of letters! It was so droll that Rochefort could not resist. He put him in that establishment of lunatics called *Le Tintamarre*, and knowing him incapable of writing a single line — even there — he amused himself by writing his articles for him.

Then occurred a singular thing. This Rochefort, stiff and dull when he wrote for himself, assumed in behalf of another a trivial, crazy liveliness which resembled Rossignol's own personality; incarnating himself in that burlesque type, he acquired all its eccentricities, all its effrontery. The maddest things that came into his head, the things one dares not say, the scum of the pen, the

mud of the ink, seemed to him good enough for Rossignol; and as he mingled with them his own *flair* of Paris and his clever vaudevillist knack of managing effects, there resulted a species of facetious literature, coldly frenzied, illustrative to indecency, not French at all, but very Parisian, dislocated in style, sentences turning summerset, which secured the fortune of *Le Tintamarre* and made Rossignol famous from the Café de Suède to Bobino. On that day Rochefort found his manner. He did not deceive himself as to that; and after a few months of such exercise, when he knew his trapèze thoroughly, he said to the other, "Go alone!" and henceforth he did Rossignol on his own account.

The unfortunate satellite, abandoned to himself, did not do so badly, — living a little on his reputation and a little on what he had learned from his master. Then some money was bequeathed to him, and hey! the ladies of Bobino, the journalists, the suppers, the gay bohemian life! In short, the poor fellow came to the end he wished for: he killed himself by sitting up o' nights, and went away to die in the gentle land of Cannes, in the neighbourhood of Victor Cousin and other celebrated persons, which caused him a certain satisfaction.

Rochefort had various reasons for not throwing himself into the same way of life. In the first place, his stomach, — one of those terrible gastralgic stomachs, always irritated, ruined at birth, by which the Michelets of the future will not fail to explain his literary temperament. Besides, where

would he have found the time to dissipate? He had enough to do to keep up with that hurricane of Parisian vogue which fell upon him like a thunderbolt, uplifted him, shook him, scattered his budding fame from the Jockey-Club to the wilds of America, spreading about him a tremendous and laughable popularity by which he was himself dumbfounded. People pointed him out to one another, and fought for him. Race-horses bore his name. Courtesans pursued him. "Show me your Rochefort," said the Duc de Morny whenever he met Villemessant. For it is well to know that if Rochefort is culpable all Paris has been his accomplice. We spoilt him. We said too often: "How droll he is, that Rochefort!" You, yourself, O Veuillot! you laughed. And how determined he was, that fellow, to make us laugh! How afraid that his fame would escape him! Which of us has not seen him biting his nails, the day after one of his articles, asking himself anxiously: "What can I tell them next?" And so, when he felt that his vein was exhausted, when he had nothing more to say, he did as Rossignol had done; he relied on audacity and said all, *all*—in the Rossignol language. Hence the success of the *Lanterne*.

Ah! my friend, God keep us from a success like that. When a man has once tasted it he never ceases to drink it, no matter at what price, and no matter in what glass. In hospitals you can see unfortunate men cursed with alcoholic madness, flinging themselves thus on anything they can find;

vitriol, eau de Cologne, all is good to them, provided they can drink it. This is Rochefort's condition. If that man of intelligence, if that gentleman is picked up of a morning in the gutter of the Père Duchêne, believe me, it is not political passion that drove him into it. Politics! did he ever even know what they are? Nor is it love of gain; I know him to be above that. No, it is an inextinguishable thirst for popularity, the alcoholism of success, with all its symptoms, — taste lost, stammering, mind wandering, madness.

At one moment we thought him saved. During the five months of the siege he had the courage to let himself be forgotten, to write no more; and this should be remembered in his favour. But after that, what a falling back! In his absence others had *done Rochefort*, and done it better than he. In vain he shouted and gesticulated, his popularity was lost, gone to the Maroteaus and the Vermesches. . . This is how I explain his anger, his delirium during the last days, that temporary insanity, that overflow of bile which drowned everything and blinded him as if his gall-bladder had burst.

In spite of all, rid him of his bile and his foam, and Rochefort will always remain a figure of this period. He came at his right time; he found the house wide open, as if he were expected. He was the providential missile — if providence there be about it — sent to break the first window of the Empire and give the signal of the general demolition. . . Even from the point of view of our pro-

fession, we ought to pay attention to him. His pamphlets often have fire, wit, and comic power. He gives me the effect of an exasperated Paul-Louis Courier, exactly on the level of his epoch and speaking to it in a language it understands. The two pamphleteers resemble each other in the part they have played, in their implacable hatreds, and in the artificiality of their style — for neither write naturally. But there is this difference between them, the same difference that there was between the two Courts, the one, where Horace was translated, the other where Theresa was invoked. Courier takes the affectation of his language from the old towers of the sixteenth century; Rochefort has picked up his in the brand-new slang of the nineteenth. In reading Paul-Louis I see old Amyot laughing at me between the lines. In reading Rochefort I think all the while of Rossignol.

THE SENTRY-BOX.

"THE impression made upon me by places is one of my troubles. I am affected by them beyond all reason."

These words of a nervosity wholly contemporaneous, which one might think were written yesterday, are really those of Mme. de Sévigné; and never, to my thinking, did she say anything more deeply felt or more profound.

There is, in truth, in the places where we live, a mysterious influence, issuing from wood, from stone; a malignancy in surrounding things which takes delight in troubling our souls, upsetting our ideas, and impressing our miserable brains beyond all reason. I don't remember now which little town in Algeria it was where the soldiers mounting guard at a certain point of the ramparts felt themselves seized, in less than an hour, with an insurmountable disgust for life. Two or three times a week some one or other of these poor devils was found hanging to a nail of the sentry-box; and the proof that there was something more in this than the mere nostalgia of recruits lay in the fact that as soon as the sentry-box was pulled down the epidemic of suicides ceased.

This was certainly a specimen of the *jettatura* mentioned by Mme. de Sévigné; but I know a still more striking instance. Don't you remember Émile Ollivier arriving from Saint-Tropez in the month of April, 1870, to construct that marvellous public building of a composite order called the Liberal Empire? He too, unfortunate fellow, had the malady of the sentry-box; and it was to evade its pernicious influence, to put himself as much as possible under shelter from the bad air which pervades great buildings in charge of the State, that he was firmly resolved not to take up his abode at the ministry.

"I shall go there in the morning," he said to his friends, "as an Englishman goes to his counting-room in the city. In the evening, business over, I shall shut up the office, and come back to the rue Saint-Guillaume."

And then, exciting himself with the idea of his coming liberalism, he continued enthusiastically:

"I will show them what a minister of Justice should be. No style in his household, no equipages. I shall go to the Chamber on foot, to the Tuileries on foot, and never then except to the Council of ministers. I am determined not to attend either the grand receptions or to the little suppers. That is where consciences are lost; and I intend to keep mine. . . Ah! they accuse me of having sold myself! well they shall see, they shall see."

In saying this the worthy man was sincere, and the execution of this fine programme was actually

begun. For some time the ministry of Justice, so stiff, so formal, was open to the public like any other vast assemblage of offices. Everything went on in American fashion. The minister received you without letters of audience. The antechambers stood empty, the ushers crossed their arms; in the gloom of the great deserted salons they could be heard wandering about with melancholy steps shaking their chains like captives. The head of the staff, one of those fat fathers with troublesome digestions who are always afraid of apoplexy, received the head-clerks in the courtyard, a cigar between his teeth, and wrote his signatures on his knees at the edge of the portico; which greatly scandalized the office servants of Monsieur Delangle, all of them as grave and pompous as magistrates.

As for his Excellency, had you seen him arrive in the morning through the arcades of the rue de Castiglione, spectacles on his nose, cravat awry, his long overcoat of the last provincial cut, and that fine new portfolio swelling with the projects of the Liberal Empire, you would have thought him an inspector of primary schools rather than the minister of Justice. This modest behaviour did him great harm at the Tuileries, where his crooked cravat kept the ladies of honour and the chamberlains a-laughing; but that did not trouble him. Faithful to his scheme of independence, the new minister had nothing to do with any one except the emperor, and he always left the imperial palace with his head high and his glance proud, having

not so much as a glass of *eau sucrée* on his conscience.

It was at the height of these great ministerial reforms that the killing of Victor Noir occurred. Poor Victor Noir! by merely writing his name, I see him crossing the boulevard in two strides, with his tall hat of rough gray nap, his pink cheeks, his athletic shoulders, that exuberance of strength and joy which he knew not how to give vent to, and that good, hearty desire to please that shone in his boyish eyes. If he were still living he would be only twenty-three years old! . .

But what is the good of talking of these things? The case has been judged and decided; the death of that lad is nothing to us now but a date in history — an unforgetable date, however. On that day a new personage, on whom the makers of plans never count, that tragical shuffler of cards called the Unexpected, entered suddenly upon the stage and since then has never left it.

At the first news of the drama at Auteuil, before the lawyers had taken possession of the corpse and paraded it everywhere on the tumbril of democratic exhibition, all Paris was roused to indignation, — Émile Ollivier more than any one. The night of the crime he walked up and down his office brandishing the letter in which Prince Pierre wrote to M. Conti, with the careless ease of a noble of the fifteenth century: "I believe I have killed one of them."

"Ah! he has killed one of them, has he?" cried the luckless minister in spectacles. "And he

thinks he can call it killing? — it is murder. Bonaparte though you be, you shall go to the galleys, monseigneur."

Meantime as it grew very late and the ministry was still full of people, — M. Grandperret, prefect of police, reporters, messengers, — the minister could not return home as usual to the rue Saint-Guillaume, and towards morning, dropping with fatigue, he went to the bed of his predecessor.

The next day, when he woke, he was no longer the same man. The indignation of the evening before had given place to conventional sadness, uttered in administrative language. The murder was nothing more than a dreadful misfortune, a very regrettable affair; one must wait; one must see. The influence of the sentry-box was beginning to be felt. On the following day, worse still. Paris was not yet pacified; it was judged necessary to remain *pro tem.* at the ministry. Little by little the habit was taken, so that after the miserable Noir affair was smothered, the minister's residence there became permanent. Ushers and halberdiers resumed their pompous pose at the doors of the reception-rooms; the bags of the chandeliers were removed, and the founder of the Liberal Empire was delivered over, without being himself aware of it, to the malignancy of furniture and of local officials.

From that day he became a perfect minister of Justice; suppressed newspapers, sequestrated individuals, supped at the Tuileries, watched his cravats, did all that he did not mean to do, and

burned all that he had formerly adored. His voice changed; from shrill it became sour. Contradiction was intolerable to him. Despotic to others, he became the courtier of the master, and when the war began, seeking for nought but favour, hallucinated by the air of the sentry-box, he could neither will anything, nor hinder anything. It was thus that he ruined France, and all of us, and himself, and his dream of a Liberal Empire as well.

Oh! the fatal influence of official sentry-boxes; who can feel himself sufficiently strong to resist it? Moderate liberals, irreconcilables, *indécousables*, the purest of the pure, in less than one year they all passed that way. I have before my eyes the pompous posters of the Central Committee on the morrow of March 18, also that species of pastoral letter, well floured with philanthropy, in which they disavowed with such indignation the murders in the rue des Rosiers. What protestations and promises did they not make to us! How often they said, "You will see." And what did we see? They had hardly entered the Hôtel de Ville, masters of the mayors and the ministers, before those givers of the holy water of political clubs became the most execrable of tyrants. Does this mean that all those fellows were rascals? No! Besides ferocious gamins, delirious rhetoricians who played at '93 and put their reading into action, besides adventurers, cynics, roysterers, there were men who believed themselves republicans, illuminati of socialism whose lives had hitherto been honest

and honourable. For them I ask some clemency. Borne suddenly into power, and overtaken by its vertigo, all the more because they were so little prepared for it, they are scarcely responsible for their acts. The atmosphere of the sentry-boxes had turned them into madmen.

THE TRICOTEUSE.

SOME eighteen or twenty years ago certain very young fellows from the provinces, arriving in Paris to seek their fortunes with their heads full of Balzac and their teeth of a fine length, were very seriously bent on reconstituting the Society of the Thirteen. They distributed the parts among themselves, and assigned to each his battle ground: "You — you are a handsome fellow; you shall be our de Marsay, you will succeed through women and salons. You, Blondet, by the newspapers. You Rastignac, in politics." All efforts, all resources were to be held in common. Those who had fine linen and varnished boots were to give them to de Marsay to enable him to go into society. All the wit they each possessed, their invention of clever sayings and ideas were to be scrupulously laid aside for the journalist. Clients were to be found for Doctor Bianchon; the political man must be brought forward and talked about in the cafés, — all this being wrapped in masonic mystery, passwords, private signals, and the rest of the pretty nonsense beneath which Balzac concealed at will the gravity and depth of his marvellous studies.

Unfortunately, such things may be dreamed and written, but they never live. Our Thirteen were not long in finding this out. At the end of about a week the agreement weakened; those who had fine linen preferred to wear it; the journalist had to make his wit for himself; the political man talked alone in the cafés, while his brethren thought only of emptying their mugs. In short, as our young men were not without intelligence (and the air of Paris gave them more and more daily), they ended by laughing in one another's faces and going off, each on his own line, to make their way. I don't know how they succeeded. I only remember that one of them — the one selected as the political man and from whom I received these details — found, after a while, his career and his adventures suddenly interrupted; his name was Jules Vallés.

Balzac, Mme. Sand, and all the great novel-writers of the modern school have often been reproached for having bemuddled quantities of young brains and ruined whole lives by turning them into fiction. But is that the fault of our novelists? Is it not more just to lay the blame on that need of imitation inherent in youth, especially French youth, impressionable and vain to excess, eternally tormented by the desire to play a part, to put on a celebrated skin, to be some one — as if the best means of being some one were not to remain one's self.

And as for this, if we are to make our novelists responsible for all these aberrations of young

brains what shall be said of our historians? They too, they have caused great ravages, especially of late years. Ever since this rage for historical studies came to us from England and from over the Rhine, ever since this avalanche of histories of the Revolution, of memoirs of Robespierre, Saint-Just, *l'Ami du peuple* the old *Cordelier*, descended upon us have we not seen the springing up of a whole generation of Young France, swathed in huge Jacobin waistcoats, carrying their heads *en Saint Sacrament*, and recalling the Convention by the multiplied folds of their muslin cravats? They do not now say: "You shall be de Marsay; I will be Rastignac." No, these say: "You shall be Saint-Just; I will be Robespierre"—which is quite as comical and much more dangerous. I positively heard four years ago, in a restaurant in the Latin quarter, young Gascons declaring in their devilish accent: "Hein! that Raoul Rigaut! what a fine Fouquier-Teïnville he would make!" He did not fail to do so, the wretch! and we ought to do him the justice to say that he thoroughly filled his part. Vermorel played Robespierre and made no concealment about it, copying the man with the pointed nose in even his private life, his puritan morals, and the arrangement of his home like that of a country curate. They all had their '93 type at which they aimed. Sometimes there were two of the same; Robespierre-Vermorel had his double in the lawyer Floquet, who was called, among his intimates, Maximilien. At other times they cumulated, and one

man played two personages. I met last winter a pretty little officer of chasseurs, whom Young France had taught to think he was Hoche and Marceau in one. Not Hoche only, nor Marceau only. No! Hoche *and* Marceau! And he believed it, that innocent! You could not have made him laugh. Grave and proud, teeth clenched, gesture feverish, you had only to see him drink his absinthe to feel that within him were the terrible preoccupations of a man who hides beneath his overcoat the two great swords of the future republic, and is always in fear of losing one of them.

These things amused us then. None of us imagined that the comedy would end so tragically.[1] For my part, I regarded it all as a play, and when I could slip into their *coulisses* I delighted in watching the actors of the coming revolution delving at their parts, rehearsing, practising stage business, getting themselves up, and vamping over the old decorations for this renewal of '93, which they intended to give some day or other, but which I myself then thought impossible.

It was in this way that I chanced to be present at the formation of a corps of *tricoteuses* [knitters], of whom I just escaped being one of the organizers. The circumstances were as follows: —

It was during the siege, at the hardest moment of that hard winter of black cold and of black

[1] Strange to say, little is generally known, speaking comparatively, of the Commune of Paris, the horrors of which equalled those of '93. The reader is referred to M. Maxime Ducamp's history of it. — TR.

bread, when one could not step without jostling some baby's coffin carried in the arms and hurried along by the walls of houses. "It is heart-breaking, the number of children who are dying at Montmartre," said to me one of the most frantic of the Ninty-three-ers of the Café de Madrid. "The poor little things go barefooted in the snow. The cold is killing them like sparrows. It would be charity to give them stockings, good, warm, woollen stockings. I am organizing a subscription for it — how much will you give?"

The Ninety-three-er, of his own nature, is not sentimental. In the steel-blue regions where he soars there are no little children; there are only ideas, abstractions, and a few geometrical figures, such as the triangle and the guillotine. Consequently, I was rather astonished. My man perceived it, and in order to convince me, he added: "Come to-night to Montmartre. I am to speak in behalf of the object. You shall subscribe then if you feel inclined."

It was worth the trouble, and I made the journey to Montmartre.

The affair took place in a ballroom on the exterior boulevard; some Boule-Noir, or Élysée, or other, which had been transformed into a "club." It is to be remarked that the political education of the people of Paris takes place, as a rule, in the dance-halls.

When I arrived the session had already begun, the hall was full, — an immense hall of great length, well arranged for squads of quadrilles and the

glorification of the *cavalier seul* performance. A few petroleum lamps (Paris being now without gas); a little stove around which laurestinus in boxes were shivering like old men; on the seats an audience of workmen, lesser bourgeois, National Guards, Civic Guards, a few Mobiles, a few *jupillons* in velvet caps, five or six cocottes in ragged silk gowns; some had come for the club, others for the stove, and the cocottes from the habit of going to dance-halls every evening. And in truth there was something pervading the atmosphere like an echo of the former frou-frou; bits of mazurkas, bars of waltzes humming about the ceiling like last year's flies. Above it all, a thick mist, smelling of pipes and moist flesh.

Perched on the raised platform of the orchestra was my Ninety-three-er, speaking with melancholy emotion of the great misery of the people and the terrible mortality among little children. Suddenly he interrupted himself, retreated one step backward on the platform, arms outstretched, mouth open, eyes staring, the classic amazement of expressive heads.

"What do I behold, citizens?" he cried. "There, there, in the midst of you, a woman, that woman, who knits —"

He stopped for a moment as if suffocated by emotion, and stood still, arm extended. We all turned round and I saw, where he pointed, an old woman with a *canaille* head and that crooked lip and twist of the mouth from which one hears in the faubourg the tones of a blackguard of any

sex before he speaks. Under her cap and through her grizzled hair was a knitting-needle which stuck out like a dart and gave her the look of a dangerous beast. Her bony hands, which she lifted high, held the half-knitted stocking of a child.

While we looked at her the orator continued:

"Who is this brave woman, this citizen who comes to the club with her knitting, to listen while she works to patriotic words? Ah! now I recognize her! She is a knitter of Montmartre — one of those who knit, O people! that your children may be warm like the children of the rich; she knits that cold — in the person of Badinguet — may not cut the throats of all of them (*laughter and shouts of Good! good!*); that a few be left to see the dawn of a better day (*Bravo! bravo!*). O saintly knitters of Montmartre! you are worthy of your elder sisters; like them you will have your place in history. Knit, knit therefore, like them, for the People, for liberty! knit, knit, knit!"

There was no need to tell her to knit. Under the eyes of that crowd the old woman knitted without pause, energetically, and I caught a wink which she gave to her confederate. From that wink I understood the whole affair. I saw that the little children of Montmartre were only a pretext, and that the sole object was to raise a battalion of *tricoteuses*, to float once more a musty vocable of the dictionary of '93, to vamp over an old catch-word of the first revolution.

Well, well! In spite of all, their revolution has turned out more original than they expected to make it. They wanted the *tricoteuse* and they got the *petroleuse*. That ought to teach this Young France something.

A YEAR OF TROUBLE.

NOTES OF A PARISIAN WOMAN.

BY MADAME DAUDET.

FACTS do not strike me, only the atmosphere which they create about them, the time of day when I became cognizant of them, the peculiar impression of which they ever after retain for me. That is what I shall now try to relate to you — I mean that singular emotion made up of the lessening echoes of great battles and the distant murmur of dying towns.

In the May of last year, fleeing from Paris already in trouble and saddened by an epidemic, we found at the little house in Seine-et-Oise the flowering trees and the usual quiet. Every day news reached us, accounts of riots every evening, those boulevard riots in which the railings of a theatre become a refuge and the newspaper kiosks attempts at barricades. These nightly tumults, which one drove to see in carriages, made me feel the triviality of that hurrying, shouting crowd, singing as if for a festival at an hour when the boulevard lamps give to the leafage of the trees the reflections of a village ball. The word "Revolution," then pronounced recalled to me my earliest childhood, a

flight through torn-up suburbs, and courtyards laid open by cannon-balls; also the emotion of those about me; emotion which children feel in the trembling of the arms that carry them, and the voice that speaks to them; and lastly, the country, which I saw again in sunshine, all blue like the mist of a dream, the arrival, the rest, all danger passed. This was like a lightning flash from the bottom of my memory; but the great moral shock, the deaths at the street corners, all those sinister things that my childish eyes had not perceived, I still did not imagine.

In this sad month of May Parisians were hurrying to the railway stations as they always do in spring. For many, who expected to return in the autumn, exile was actually beginning, a bathing-season prolonged to a year, a life in hotels far away from the home. Mothers were departing, little aware that they would never again see the beloved home, the family nest where they had warmly nurtured their dispersed children, and all unthinking that they should die away from it in a land of passage. Here a child is starting for a holiday who will be thought of later with regret for the hasty adieus and the long revoirs. Everywhere separated beings; and later, for all, a poignant uncertainty.

The small-pox, which had driven us from Paris, rapidly invaded our tranquil refuge. The few houses between the forest and the Seine were made uneasy by it for several days. Whole families were attacked, and twice I met the same

woman in mourning, who had walked a league in the dust and heat to attend the death-bed of a relation. I was working one afternoon at my window. The weather was fine; all was youth and song, the trees in their verdure, the flowers in bud. Some one said: "A man has just died close by you."

I had seen that man sometimes as he came along the road from the fields, carrying his tools, bent, weary, humble, and obscure. I don't know what great feeling moved me all of a sudden; without thinking about it, it seemed to me that death went past me, quite close, beautiful death; and as it passed it enlarged the sky, the horizon, suspending for a second all that springtide of life, respectful before the eternal silence.

Summer came, a superb summer of long days, rich and flowery. The air of the garden grew tinted, perfumed with blossoms that opened to the sun. The harvests promised to be magnificent. How many were left standing that year! How many ripened and were never gathered, but were lost, scattered, or burned in barns and granaries open to the winds! At this time the sunsets seemed to glow like conflagrations, and we felt, passing through our tranquil hours and deserted fields, a stormy breath that bent the wheat and made the dust of the high-roads whirl as if from a charge of cavalry. War had been declared.

The Marseillaises at the street corners; battalions crossing Paris and beating time with their steps "to

Berlin," lines of ambulances, collections taken up by the wayside for the white banners with the red cross. And then that sad departure of young lads, Mobiles, still mere school-boys, whom their mothers brought in carriages, with how many tears! And that formidable throng at the railway stations, that sad concourse as if the whole city were depopulating itself, in which one has so fully the sensation of crowds; the exhaustion, the bewildering lassitude of that great uproar. What a hum of departing trains! . . Hasten! they are cutting the rails over there, they are burning the stations. It seems as though each train were lost in the darkness; as if the battalions sown along the great plains might seek in vain to come together, to reunite. All is trouble and confusion. From time to time a word in the newspapers which chills the heart: "The enemy are pillaging the French waggons at Reims." We scent defeat, rout.

Every family felt the counter-blow of our disaster. I remember at a birthday fête how the flowers were quickly hidden and all eyes filled with tears; anxiety for the absent one, the dread of fresh departures; the table seemed too large, the house empty.

Soon we were forced to return to Paris. Never in my life shall I forget that August day; the peasant-women weeping at their doors as they watched the laden carriages and flocks of animals passing pell-mell along the roads; oxen fastened upon carts, and hand-barrows on the highway. Near to Paris the trees were cut down, the ram-

parts strengthened, crowded by workmen; and, in spite of the defeat, as it was Sunday and the sun was shining, women in white waists and light-coloured skirts who had come to look on at the works.

It is now September 4. A morning of expectation; something in the air like the vague shadow, foretold, which precedes a great eclipse. Towards midday the bakers close their shops, the streets empty. Fighting, they said, was going on in the Place de la Concorde. Paris is so vast that one never knows exactly what is happening. . . But no! from the boulevard a band of men are coming down singing at the top of their voices. The Republic is proclaimed. I feel very sad. It seems, however, that this is fortunate, but I do not like these songs of a crowd which take you by the throat, force emotion, and make it nervous. I would rather hear a clear, calm voice announce great things.

The next day, a visit to the camp at Saint-Maur. What flags! Paris was still gay, or rather, giddy. The war seemed forgotten. Perhaps because the Prussians were felt to be steadily advancing, and a trip beyond the gates — gates that were being armed and fortified and would soon be closed like those of a prison — was almost a boon. Much noise and dust. We went along the race-course, and the whole way resounded with the noisy gayety of Parisians who come out once a week to look at trees.

The lines of tents, under shelter of Vincennes, the little wars, the volleys of which escaped in a white smoke at the foot of low hills, and the dips in the ground, so well fitted to group episodes of battle, this going and coming of uniforms, of artillery, of people in Sunday clothes, of traders of all sorts, this morrow of revolution, driving with great noise in over-crowded *char-à-bancs*, remain fixed in my memory.

A few days later, still of a Sunday, the first cannon sounded under a clear blue sky. The very early hour, the quiet of the streets and neighbouring courtyards, the stillness of all the manufactories, of the thousand noises that one hears, and which fill the work-days, conversations at doors — signs of stoppage or of fête — everything about me made me think of former 15ths of August; the balconies decked with little lanterns, lines of gas-jets, and flowered with flags, the long avenue of the Champs-Élysées, the great quays of the Seine bathed in Bengal lights and a rain of gold. . . This time the cannon signified other things.

Again an appearance of fête, these pilgrimages to the statue of the city of Strasburg, bouquets in hand, bands at their head. Later that stone face was veiled in crape. And yet they did not swathe in black the statues of the tombs; their mourning garb was white, strewn with *immortelles*.

It was during these last days of sunshine that I saw, in the Palais-Royal, seated against a tree on the hard gravel of the public garden, two poor

women, two working-women, employed in making caps. Children were playing around them, two handsome, chubby children, rather sun-burned. The women were not Parisians, nor peasants either. Looking at them, one thought of the outskirts of Paris, some village square, doorways encumbered with linen drying, children playing, women working, of melancholy streets ending in fields, pavements full of grass, and horizons of fortifications. Poor people! they were all coming in, dragging their household goods with them, to lodge in Paris in I know not what dark hole; and, impelled by the habits of open air and outdoor life, these two had come to sit at the foot of trees, while the Mobiles were being drilled before the shops of the jewellers and the tables of the café. Exiles everywhere! These sad, homeless women, those tall fellows in blue blouses, all under their guns in the bent, patient attitude of beings accustomed to delve, to toil in the earth; listening to commands with the puckered brow of narrow intellects which have to collect themselves wholly before they slowly understand; after which they remember well. Such were the exiles from the provinces.

Where are those from Paris? Great cases full of light-coloured gowns, morning gowns, toilets for the seashore, for Casinos, canes of Louis Seize, little hats with enormous feathers — all had been taken away for a trip of two months. October comes; the rain falls; the sea is high; the weather melancholy. Let us move on. Accordingly they change their abode, thinking all the while of Paris.

Artillery caissons, ambulances, concerts for the wounded, a noisy and lugubrious boulevard. At night, the shops lighted by a single lamp, the houses, the trees having ample space to spread their shadows, and the moonlight superb in this extinguished city — which makes the corners of the streets dangerous, the roofs wan, Paris too large — it is thus that we must see it in dreaming of it.

Each house has its anguish. The children no longer have milk. We tremble for those on the ramparts. We fear for those afar off, in that gloomy line which surrounds the city, an engagement of the outposts and those watches of the grand'garde, where the slightest rustle of foliage, a pebble rolling to the water brings the hissing of bullets. Danger everywhere, and day by day less hope. Oh! those dark days, the pigeons lost, the provinces so far off, the mud of Bourget, the cannon always belated, the square of the Hôtel de Ville foggy and tumultuous.

And yet, perhaps never did one feel that force, that living soul of Paris, more active, — in spite of the very cold winter, the waitings before the butcher's-shops, begun in the night-time and in snow, when the cannon of the forts were thundering, when we dreamed of French battalions advancing in haste through a devastated country, the woods rased, and having but one battle left to fight, one river left to cross; we breathed everywhere an air of high courage, as if in Paris, already

delivered, the gates opened, Liberty were hovering above the whole city, laden with conquering banners.

But beyond the ramparts what distress! Deserted roads, abandoned manufactories, great gloomy plains already looking like battle-fields, the earth torn-up and hollowed. Loop-holes in the walls of the manufactories, intrenchments in the parks, battalions of Mobiles encamped in all the villages, some installed in pretty bourgeois residences with gilded railings, porticos, balconies, where uniforms were drying the day after mounting guard; others were shivering, lighting great fires in the one-storey houses where the smaller tradesmen of Paris go out in summer to spend one day a week, and where from the garden and the low-windowed chambers they can talk and call to one another in the peace of a Sunday evening.

All around, overlooking this melancholy zone, woods, mills, hillsides, scarcely distinct in the fogs of winter, where the enemy's cannon keep arriving daily in spite of the snow and the bad roads; planting themselves in ambush, pointing at Paris, rendering forever lugubrious the names of little villages, so gay to read in the sunshine on the railway stations, at the corners of roads when they were to Parisians the objects of a drive and a rendezvous for fêtes.

The days become shorter, bread more scarce. One evening, in the twilight of shops lighted by one lamp only, there are gilt things, bright ribbons,

sugar-plums in tender colours. This is Christmas! The humble cradle sheltered in corners of chapels, rocked with canticles and flowered with lilies — adorable symbols of infancy — gives eternal joy to all the little ones. They ought to see in dreams at least once a year that smiling Jesus lying in the manger, the straw scattered round him, like luminous rays.

For children likewise, this New Year's Day in a beleaguered city spreading playthings out among the encumbering masses of battalions in arms. On little tables the height of a child's eye, we see once more the little articles of furniture (which look like a pauper's house-moving), and the chubby-faced dolls, to which snow and the north wind are giving such lively colours. The shops are filling with marvels. And yet those heavy drays we are wont to see arriving at the stations of the Eastern railroad, laden with white wooden boxes retaining, as it were, a perfume of the forests of the North, are not coming this year; perhaps they will never come again. But do not feel alarmed. Paris can suffice unto herself, and our children will never lack playthings. In the depths of the sad little courtyards in the poorer quarters, in corners of the faubourg without light or air there are tall houses five storeys high filled with patient needles and delicate looms which scatter threads of gold lace and shavings of rosewood into the dust of attics.

Paris still found strength to smile. Two days later, on three sides at once, the bombardment

broke forth, lugubrious, continual. The earth was shaken as well as the air, and hearths that were sheltered and far from disaster felt their windows shaken like a warning or a threat. In that great city, where the closed manufactories were silent, their strength and life expending themselves on the ramparts and at the outposts, in the streets almost deserted, where carriages were rare and passers sad, this great bombardment resembled those storms which make silence around them, arrest the rustle of leaves and the murmur of fields, as if to render more sinister the thunderbolt that falls and the house that crumbles.

The first lightning of this great storm had shone upon the blue line of the frontiers on a fine summer's day. The wheat was not reaped, the vines lined the slopes, the great trees quivered full of life. The rivers sang beneath the arches of the bridges, and the town surrounded by fortresses, the villages surrounded by water, composed with their daily life an atmosphere of noise or of calmness, which rose into their corner of the sky, and seemed as if it must envelop them forever.

"The enemy is crossing the Rhine all along the front."

I remember the shudder that I felt on reading that little despatch, slender as the line that marks the frontier on a map, with such great horizons beyond it. After that day nothing could stop them, and that enormous power, *invasion*, irresistible as water, which flows the stronger and more terrible from each obstacle, drove in the ramparts, and

forced the passages. Paris, for five months, was indeed the Isle of France in the midst of a torrent which roared around its gates.

The struggle is over. As the forts must be surrendered, and the arms delivered up, the soldiers return to Paris. They march without order, disbanded. We feel the tumult of that return, which lets us see, confused, confounded, dragging their feet, those masses of men, usually so alike in gait and costume, a unit in marching, that we seem to hear a giant's step upon the way. But near the Observatory at the corner of one of those streets lined with trees which end Paris, I saw a whole battalion of Bretons marching in line as they did on their departure. From time to time the commander who marched at their head turned round to them: "Come on, my *gars*, come on!" This was said with the intonation of a shepherd gathering and encouraging a wearied flock. All around were battered houses, twisted balconies, and burned sheds. That day was heart-breaking. Emotion trembled in all voices. Discouragement was in the air, a lassitude that was felt even more than defeat, the despair of the useless weapon, broken, and flung into the moats of the fortress.

Trouble entered Paris at that moment and never left it again. It was perpetual agitation — the agitation that fills the streets and leaves the workshops empty. Processions without end went up to the Bastille, grouped themselves around the column of July, which was decorated with red

flags and crowns of *immortelles*. Cannon rumbled along the pavements as if casting a defiance to that accursèd place. One felt that a great impetus had been given, and that a city stirred for four months by so many songs, trumpet-blasts, and drums, could not return to labour and to calmness without a shock. Paris still kept up its appearance of a besieged city living from day to day. The sidewalks were noisy, encumbered with articles of all kinds as on the morrow of a conflagration, when, the house being destroyed, the household goods which have been saved cast hurriedly from the windows, the women and children camp in the streets and settle there for the life of a day.

I do not know what uncertainty keeps us at the windows, drags us to noises. Bayonets glitter everywhere, though nothing more was said of battles, barricades at the bridges, defiances of Paris against Paris, those dangerous misunderstandings, when tocsins and volleys answer each other with the obstinacy of a signal. We felt the pavements tremble, hatreds quiver. With it all, the caprice of a Parisian springtime, the most capricious of all. The March sun, that hot sun which comes before the buds put forth, scorches and does harm, gliding between two showers upon crazy posters. While in the deserted shops the long idle shopkeepers are hastening to dress their windows, clean the panes, and sweep away the dust, sole visitor from without for months, carriages are passing silently, hurriedly, bearing away the life of Paris, the fortunes of Paris.

Behold her delivered over to herself, shut up anew, that terrible Paris. We, who have all left her, we live with our eyes turned to the hills that hide her from us and knowing nothing now of what goes on within her. We are here in a conquered country; the roads are free, the gates wide open, the house is no longer its own. The railings have gaps for the passage of cavalry, and around the lawns, which are turning green, and the groves, that are budding, soldiers are walking about, crushing the flowers, cutting the branches with the careless indifference of idler and victor. Near-by are other country-houses, completely abandoned for the last year; their owners departing when the war broke out, and never returning to see the miseries of the invasion.

The house is plundered, the hedges ruined, grass is growing in the paths. In a corner of the garden is a woman in charge of a child, her eyes turned to the highway, rendering the solitude that hangs about her sadder still by her own air of expectant waiting and idleness. The bridges had all been destroyed and the great trees felled where their shadows had lain, and yet by the shore road which swept round the slope the Prussians arrived in spite of all precautions, without the loss of either man or horse.

For the last four months they have been there. Battalions succeed each other, marching toward Paris or returning to Germany, and, after a short halt and a summons on the high-road (for all doors are marked in advance), the men enter, in-

stall themselves, clean their arms, set the watches, and go in and out at all hours.

Nothing is usually more charming than to be the last to go to sleep in a silent house which we feel to be full of loved ones. A great calm after the bustle of the day pervades the walls, the furniture; the air of the garden and all the breezes heard in the tranquillity of the night seem the breathing of the house itself, slumbering in the moonlight, the doorway mute, the windows closed. But to feel close by an imposed guest, one who has come of himself, gun in hand, bloodying hedges and rivers, a guest who has entered by force, to whom grief and pride gave free way as soon as he arrived! Who knows from how many battles he is resting, and with how many dreams of victories and massacres he is troubling the invisible soul of the home? There is a corner in the house that one would fain wall up.

It was in the midst of all this sadness that we heard cannon thundering in Paris. In the wood still leafless the shells fell like hail; the nightingales uttered their limpid notes in the white-thorn bushes, the frogs hopped about in the little pools which the rain had left in the ruts; the noise was too great and too distant to disturb those little lives that were only made uneasy by the breaking of a branch, or the fall of a leaf.

The Tuileries and the Louvre are burned!

The Tuileries, a beautiful memory of childhood! Parisian Sundays, sombre skies above the gray slate

roofs, the basins where the alleys widen and branch, the sad clock, the statues, the great terrace skirting the quay, the water so near, the soft melancholy of the declining day, and the mist which rises while Paris is illuminating around it. Flocks of children, blue velvets, white furs, and later the joy, so great, of making the little feet run in the sand where we have set our own.

And the Louvre? Why no! The Louvre was saved. The next day people said: "Paris is burned, all Paris."

I saw it later, riddled with balls, in that terrible hour when the calcined walls, still standing, seemed to be protected against the flames, while from the smoking ruins rose an odour of conflagration.

On that day the weather was superb. At the top of the Hôtel de Ville the sun was putting galleries of light behind the vacant windows, and the statues stood erect and whole, as if their proud deportment had saved them from the general overthrow.

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